UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

# A STUDY OF H-B WOODLAWN: AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

A SENIOR THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONORS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

BY

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# Introduction

# Are desks and bells and passes and lectures and tardy slips and school lunches GETTING YOU DOWN?

There must be a better way to get an education. Aren't there things going on outside school that are more profitable than what's happening inside? Wouldn't it be nice to go to the art gallery every day for a course? Or to go to the Smithsonian? Or to Capitol Hill? Or the Library of Congress? Or the Kennedy Center?

Isn't there any school in Arlington that will let you sit down and decide for yourself what you're going to do?

No. NOT YET. But it could happen - next year!

# NEW SCHOOL IS COMING!

The NEW SCHOOL Committee is an ad-hoc citizen's group which has presented the School Board a proposal for a NEW SCHOOL in Arlington, to be centered in one of the six elementary schools soon to be abandoned by the County. Some of the features of the NEW SCHOOL will be:

-- Courses will be taken into the community, instead of bringing the community into the school.
-- Independent work will be emphasized, almost all courses will be on a credit-no credit basis, interdisciplinary courses will cut across traditional lines, and many methods will be tried which are unfeasible in the old structure, including total-immersion language study and one-to-one classes.
-- All decisions will be made by the students and teachers together. They are the administration.

# HELP!

None of this can happen if the School Board doesn't designate one of the elementary schools for use by the NEW SCHOOL. YOU CAN HELP! Come to the School Board meeting Thurs., May 6, in the Administration Building next to W-L at 1426 N. Quincy, and tell the School Board by your presence that you are interested and that we need a NEW SCHOOL. The meeting is at 7:30 on the first floor. Nothing can happen without YOUR help![1]

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[1]Flyer, printed and distributed by the Citizen's Committee for the New School, Arlington, Virginia, Spring 1971.

In the Spring of 1971, students, teachers, and parents of Arlington County, Virginia sought an alternative to their traditional system of public education. They wanted a high school that would bring relevance to the classroom. They wanted a curriculum that would extend the learning process beyond school doors and out into the community. They wanted a choice, and they wanted a change.

This flyer is one of the advertisements that the Citizen's Committee for the New School distributed throughout Arlington County that Spring. Through grassroots organization the activists proposed an alternative to the system. They galvanized the community, lobbied and petitioned the school board, and effectively made use of the political strategies of the day. On May 21, 1971, the Arlington County School Board approved the proposal for the New School. The Woodlawn Program, as it was called, first opened its doors in the fall of the 1971-1972 school year. It was the first year of alternative education in Arlington.

The second year was marked by the establishment of an alternative junior high school. The Hoffman-Boston Program extended educational options available to the Arlington community. The two programs operated independent of one another until they merged in the 1978-1979 school year. The new H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program was designed to provide students with more control over their education than was permitted in the traditional schools. The alternative focused on students who needed less restriction and more freedom to be successful in their academic endeavors. The flexibility, informality, and individuality of the atmosphere at H-B Woodlawn encouraged students to design and implement their own programs, and it continues to do so today.[2]

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[2]H-B Woodlawn Program, School Statement, Arlington, Virginia, 1994.

This June, Arlington will celebrate twenty-five years of alternative education in the County, and the H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program will graduate its twenty-fifth "experimental" class.

Alternative Education was the trend in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In 1971 the Woodlawn Program was not revolutionary, for experiments in education were going on all over the country. Yet in 1996, the H-B Woodlawn Program is still operational, and this can be viewed as exceptional. How is it that this school has survived while other such similar experiments have failed? What strategic lessons can be learned from the studying the quarter century of change which the school has endured? What are the losses and what are the trade-offs of maintaining an institution of liberal reform through conservative times and up to the present day?

# Chapter One
# Arlington County, Virginia:
# Setting the Stage for Alternative Education

Change was the tradition in America in the late 1960's and early 1970's. It was a period of disruption, of political protest, and of participatory democracy. Marked by the assassinations of great American leaders, the era is remembered for the liberation movements of students, women, and most notably civil rights. The country was fighting a war on two fronts. As it sent America's youth to fight the Communists in Vietnam, the entire nation fought racial prejudice at home. Citizens questioned authority at every level. Arlington County, Virginia echoed the nation's call for change.

## A PROGRESSIVE COUNTY

For decades this community lived in the midst of national reform. Located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Arlington has had a symbiotic relationship with the nation's Capitol since the days of the New Deal. Many people moved to Arlington in response to the job opportunities opening up in the New Deal governmental agencies. The newcomers came from all over the country. They were "appalled by the 'sleepy southern town' mentality that had been running things until then,"[3] and they quickly gave a new character to the county.

The growth of the United States government through World War II continued to bring thousands of newcomers to Arlington. By the late 1940's the county became primarily the residence of government employees. These people took an active interest in shaping the community in accordance with their experiences. They had a high level of education, and this together with "their relative affluence raised their standards for the sort of schooling they

[3]Jeff Kallen, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19 February 1996, page 1.

wanted their children to have."[4] In 1947, the inadequacy of Arlington's schools shocked O. Glenn Stahl when one of his children went to a high school where there wasn't even a science lab. He had attended "a high school out in Indiana a generation earlier, and it had a science lab and all the trimmings,"[5] but Arlington, on the doorstep of the Nation's capitol, was not so well equipped.

Many parents in Arlington believed the system of appointing of school board members to be part of the problem. The Commonwealth of Virginia appointed a circuit court judge who appointed a School Board Trustee Electoral Board, who in turn appointed members to the Arlington County School Board. This complex structure effectively removed the school board from any responsiveness to the people of Arlington. The county's new population challenged this system.

In 1946, the Citizens Committee for School Improvement (CCSI) began to bring about changes in Arlington's public schools. These citizens were progressive, and "quite out of favor with the traditional minded people down in Richmond."[6] At the time, the federal Hatch Act prohibited government employees from affiliating with the local political parties. The purpose of the act was to protect United States employees from undue political influence, but it had the opposite effect in Arlington. These citizens had no electoral voice and therefore no control over their own local government. As a result, they created their own political party called Arlingtonians for a Better Community, or ABC, which still exists today. It was neither Democratic nor Republican, and enough people supported it that it became a major party in the community.

Establishing this political party started as a way to upgrade the public

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[4]C.B. Rose, Jr. *Arlington County Virginia: A History.* Arlington: Arlington Historical Society, Inc. 1976. page 198.
[5]Dusty Horwitt. "The Past as Prologue." *The Washington Post,* October 31, 1993, page C1.
[6]Ray Anderson, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996, page 3.

school system. The CCSI wanted to make the school board responsible to the citizens of Arlington. To that end, the ABC lobbied the Virginia State Legislature for the right to elect their school board members by popular vote. After two years of litigation, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld their case, and "from 1947 until 1956, Arlington was the only Virginia locality ever to elect its School Board."[7]

During that time Arlington's school system rose to national acclaim. In the early fifties *Life Magazine* identified Washington-Lee High School, one of Arlington's three traditional high schools (along with Wakefield and Yorktown) as one of the ten best public high schools in the United States.[8] The trouble came in 1956, "after a year and a half of community hearings and negotiation," when the Arlington County School Board voted to uphold the 1954 Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education and adopt a three-year plan to desegregate its schools.[9] Arlington's decision to integrate violated the Virginia State Legislature's policy of "massive resistance" to integration. "The School Board assumed that Virginia's conservative Democratic State Government, though no champion of integration, would allow localities to integrate if they chose to do so. But downstate legislators had no intention of letting any Virginians comply with Brown."[10] The State Legislature refused to let the county integrate. It abolished Arlington's elected school board and installed an appointed body in its place. The county did not return to an elected school board until 1993.

From 1956, the largely Republican county board appointed members to the school board, and a renewed conservatism regulated Arlington's schools.

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[7]Dusty Horwitt. "The Past as Prologue." *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1993, page C1.
[8]Anderson interview, page 4.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Dusty Horwitt. "When Arlington Was Little Rock: Remembering a Forgotten School Integration Struggle." *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1996, page C1.

The issue of integration divided citizens and the system was fraught with trouble. "The population was divided, the county board was divided, the school board was divided, and perhaps the students to some degree were divided too."[11]

Following the state's action, a small group of determined black and white Arlington parents took up the fight to integrate their schools. "On May 17, 1956, exactly two years after Brown, the NAACP filed suit in federal court on behalf of the 14 parents and 22 children to force desegregation in Arlington's schools."[12] Though a minority, the progressive citizens of this community reflected the national movement for Civil Rights at the grassroots level. In 1958 a US District Judge upheld the Brown decision, and three years after Arlington had tried to do it on its own, the county did integrate its schools. On February 2, 1959, Arlington's Stratford Junior High School, became the first school in the state to integrate. The next day, "Arlington's peaceful integration made headlines around the world," illustrating once again the gains made by the progressive cadre of its citizens.[13]

## A DECADE OF MOVEMENTS

A wave of optimism swept the country as it moved into the next decade. In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected President and the national atmosphere became one of change: "It was time, he proclaimed, to get the country moving again."[14] The Civil Rights Movement stormed onto the national stage and questioned America at its moral core. College students committed to civil rights

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[11]Jim Stockard, discussion panel, February 15, 1996.
[12]Dusty Horwitt. "When Arlington Was Little Rock: Remembering a Forgotten School Integration Struggle." *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1996, page C1.
[13]Ibid.
[14]Allen J. Matusow. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 1984. page 18.

and the restructuring of the social order gained national attention in 1962. Students for a Democratic Society (S.D.S.) built upon grassroots organization and pushed for participatory democracy: a society in which people would take control over their own lives. The next step in this rapid radicalization was Vietnam. Many of America's youth burned their draft cards, and the anti-war movement too moved into the national limelight.

The climate was soul-searching and critical. Collectively, America was beginning to face the aftermath of the institutionalization of racism. A "hot" war with Communism was testing the whole "red menace" idea. "Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* had a major popular impact on the dream of the middle class stay-at-home housewife, and of course you had the 'Youth Culture' too with its music, drugs, and art. All of this sold newspapers, magazines, television, records, you name it."[15]

By the middle of the decade these national movements trickled down to the high school level in Arlington. Desegregation caused never-before-encountered racial problems in America's schools. An after-school stabbing that involved two Wakefield High School students (one black and the other white) marked the beginning of "racial concerns at the school."[16] Emboldened by the movements of the day, other students throughout the county questioned existing authority. At Washington-Lee High School students on the crew team complained that their coach made them cut their hair. "The Dean of Women at Washington-Lee sent girls home from school if she did not like the way they were dressed," and students complained and rebelled against that too.[17] One female student wore pants under her skirt in

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[15]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 2.
[16]Mary McBride, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 7 March 1996, page 2.
[17]Ann Broder, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 9 March 1996.

silent protest to the dress code. Others felt that true learning was lost to a book of rules, and that teachers had taken on the role of disciplinarian not educator.

Just a decade before, "Washington-Lee had been *the* high school in Virginia."[18] Yet, to many, Arlington's schools in the sixties appeared to be falling apart at the seams. Conservatives chafed the young student radicals. At Williamsburg Middle School an assistant principal put bubble gum in the hair of a male student because he thought the student's hair was too long.[19] During a community meeting at Washington-Lee, a parent slapped a student when he called her husband a fascist. The situation was getting out of hand.

Politics was very much in the air, and Arlington's proximity to the capitol naturally affected its citizens. On October 27, 1967, fifty thousand American citizens made their contribution to the Anti-War movement by marching into Arlington, Virginia to close down the Pentagon. A national movement had literally come to Arlington County. Rather than echoing national trends, its citizens were host to one.

The national climate influenced local politics in Arlington. Liberals began to win seats in the county government, and by the mid-late sixties progressives had replaced conservatives on both the county and school boards. These new board members would respond to the progressive changes of the county. It was this mixture of local and national issues that allowed for an educational reform movement to take root in Arlington County.

In 1967 the County Board established the Arlington Youth Council with representatives from all the high schools and junior highs in the community. It was an attempt on the part of the administration to solve the unrest that plagued the county's once exemplary school system. It was "a great opportunity for young people throughout the community to get to know each

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[18]Ibid.
[19]Ibid.

other, to find out what common concerns were, and to learn more about participatory democracy."[20] Liberals embraced the council as an effort to build a new generation of citizens. Operating under the supervision of a Youth Coordinator and fifteen adult members from the community, grown-ups showed young people how to operate the ropes and let them do what they could with the knowledge. Though giving students a voice was risky, letting them go unrestrained could have been disastrous. What if the students staged a sit-in or march on the school! To conservatives the council appeared the lesser of two evils. Many believed that by giving students an official voice it would be possible "to channel what they were doing."[21] The establishment of the Youth Council was in keeping with Arlington's progressive political history, but it also allowed the county administration to keep the lid on an increasingly volatile situation.

The Youth Council did offer a temporary solution to the escalating tension in Arlington's schools. 1968 changed that. In that year Americans across the spectrum believed themselves to be on the verge of revolution. Nationally there was a sense that things were changing at almost lightning speed, and the traditional order seemed to be fading fast. Many undercurrents of discontent rose to the surface. The New Right, Black Power, and Student radicals staged dramatic demonstrations. In 1968, King's assassination triggered a new wave of bloody rioting, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam seemed to signal the military American defeat. These events radicalized the nation, and they had a similar effect in Arlington. They provided links between sympathetic citizens that would be essential in Arlington's push for alternative education.

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[20]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 4.
[21]Broder interview, 10 March 1996, page 1.

Diana Huf, a student at Washington-Lee, petitioned the school board to allow students one day of school to go out into the community and talk with people about the war. "She felt this was educational and democratic."[22] Jeff Kallen, also a student at Washington-Lee, "used to print anti-war documents for his tenth grade math teacher Jerry O'Shaghnessy, who would also authorize students to print certain anti-war documents at the County Administration Building. No one balked at this because after all there was a war on."[23]

On June 26, 1969, the Arlington Youth Council submitted a lengthy proposal to the School Board regarding student "guidelines." This shocked the conservatives and galvanized the liberals. The proposal recommended "that students be governed by rules and regulations and not arbitrary decisions" which the county's existing "general guidelines" allowed for.[24] Hundreds of students from all three high schools signed a petition supporting the proposal. To counter the initiative, members of the Concerned Parents Association "wholeheartedly concurred" with the School Board's "general guidelines" and advocated that they not be amended.[25]

Debate continued. Students wanted to know why the principal of Yorktown suspended William Brock because of his long hair. Another student, Dave Henderson questioned why his teachers at Washington-Lee harassed him because he wore his hair long. Students petitioned that it "was unjust and unbecoming for a school such as Washington-Lee, with such a high reputation, to adopt a policy that deprived students of their right to an education simply because of their appearance."[26] Conservative parents

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[22]Minutes Book No.10, Arlington County, Virginia. November 6, 1969, page 199.
[23]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 2.
[24]Minutes Book No. 10, Arlington County, Virginia. June 17, 1969, page 167.
[25]Ibid.
[26]Minutes Book No. 10, Arlington County, Virginia. September 18, 1969, page 186.

continued to disagree. Mrs. Emily Griffiths argued that "school is a place to learn, and when dressed like ladies and gentlemen young people act like ladies and gentlemen,"[27] suggesting that fashionable attire was detrimental to the learning process.

In response to long debates at supplemental school board meetings, the members of the board endorsed a survey of the secondary school population to test the validity of student claims. In the fall of 1969 Steve Kurcis, an intern in Arlington's Administrative Program, conducted the survey of student attitudes towards school. He traveled to Wakefield, Washington-Lee, and Yorktown High Schools, interviewing the bright students as well as the average and below-average students, and he included those that came from wealthy, poor, and middle-class families to ensure "data that was not slanted one way or the other."[28]

The final report submitted to the School Board and the Superintendent revealed "results that were very negative in regard to attitudes toward the school from at least 80% of the students."[29] Some commented that "school was like a jail, and that it was boring: you did the same thing every day at 8:00 a.m. in the morning, and you did the same thing every day at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon."[30] Others were dissatisfied with being herded from class to class like cattle, and felt that they had no free time to talk to their friends or anyone else. The report officially documented student unrest in the high schools. The student body was changing with the times and the school system had to respond to that change.

Partially in response to the Kurcis report, Arlington began to implement educational reforms. In the Spring of 1969 Experiments in Free-

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[27]Ibid.
[28]Steve Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia 9 March 1996.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Ibid.

Form Education (EFFE) took place in all three of Arlington's public high schools. As history teachers at Wakefield, Ray Anderson and Mary McBride were among those involved. Regular classes were canceled for one week in order to try things that were not in the curriculum. Instead of teaching history that week Ray Anderson taught his students two mini-courses: one was on how to play duplicate bridge and the other on how intelligence agencies operate. The following year the school conducted an experiment they called 3-2-2 . The idea behind this experiment was to suspend regular one hour period classes for two weeks in the Spring, and teach mini-courses in two and three hour blocks instead. Students received a mini-catalogue of classes from which to choose and then attended those courses for the allotted two-week period.

Similar activities took place at the other high schools. Brenda Glenn, a teacher at Washington-Lee, taught several sections of folklore and folk music to students in her English class. "The EFFE sought to use other spaces throughout the community and extend learning outside of the classroom. One day students went to the YMCA and listened to rock bands," and another day they traveled to the National Zoo.[31] At Yorktown speakers came in to a sociology class to talk about women's rights. The school also organized "open universities" in the afternoons at various times throughout the year. Regular classes were canceled, and students were allowed "to choose the activity they participated in. It might be tap dancing" or a field trip to the county courthouse.[32] These experiments in Arlington reflected the larger movement seen in education circles at the time.

Alternative learning was a trend in the late sixties and early seventies. The "Parkway" experiment in Philadelphia gave students the opportunity to

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[31]Brenda Glenn, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 8 March 1996.

[32]Martha Bozman, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1996.

study independently and to design their own curricula. Students went to "non-graded classes in two dozen different public buildings and private institutions located along or near the mile-and-a-half length of the city's tree-lined Benjamin Franklin Parkway."[33] Educational experiments were taking place at the John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, New York, at the University of Massachusetts School of Education, and at other places around the country.

Mainstream magazines such as the *Saturday Review, Newsweek, Life,* and *Time* carried features on new ideas in education and criticisms of traditional methods. "The alternative press was coming out with new critiques of the relationship between the oppression of the educational system and the oppression of the Amerikan society (the spelling in keeping with the spirit of the times). Students, who are always unhappy about something, were given a way to focus their unhappiness into concrete proposals for change in the system."[34] Books on the subject by authors such as Neil Postman, Jonathan Kozol, and Lloyd Trump were coming out all the time .

In Arlington, *Summerhill,* a famous book about a radical English school, "had been rediscovered and redistributed."[35] New schools were under construction at both the elementary and junior high school level. The building plans were spacious with big open classrooms, and they reflected the trend toward open learning that was going on at that time.

In the Spring of 1970 the School Board received requests for a student bill of rights. The Board heard students from numerous groups throughout the county. One student, Jeff Kallen, of Washington-Lee High School's Teen-Age Democrats, pointed out that the staff stratification (at the top) suggested "ossification" in the school system, and he requested a change. Another

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[33]Donald Cox. "Learning on the Road;" *The Saturday Review,* May 17, 1969.
[34]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 2.
[35]Judy Mayeux, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996.

student, Jim Massey of Yorktown High School's Young Democrats, suggested that students be encouraged to develop an interest in education instead of being forced to attend classes. He also asked for clarification of the rules and regulations at Yorktown. Linda Sigmond, also from Yorktown High School's Young Democrats, asked that a specific "bill of rights for high school students" be adopted, and Erik Floyd, of the Wakefield Student Assembly, noted the "outmoded curriculum" and emphasized the need for "democracy and freedom of expression" in the high schools. Wayne Parks, of the Arlington Student Coalition, presented a series of budget proposals that would make the educational system "more relevant," and he urged that the School Board "undertake a major reform of the existing school system."[36] Students actively challenged the establishment, and they wrote proposals to change it.

The Arlington Student Coalition, established by a group of active high school students from all over the county, attributed the disenchantment of high school students with their educational experience to the "schools' policies of mandatory attendance and numerical grading."[37] They believed that such methods of external motivation encouraged social and educational immaturity in students who were psychologically mature in age. These high school students believed that they were old enough and mature enough to make responsible educational decisions independently of adult supervision. The coalition also claimed that the schools offered dull classes, which was why students skipped class or attended but then slept, talked, or daydreamed through the hour. They had their own ideas about how to solve such problems. The group suggested that the situation be improved through extensive use of the community and metropolitan area resources. These activities would

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[36]Minute Book No. 10, County School Board, Arlington, Virginia, March 5, 1970, page 232.

[37]Arlington Student Coalition. Memorandum in Support of Proposals to Arlington County School Board Concerning 1970-71 Budget. Arlington, Virginia, 5 March 1970, page 1.

enhance student interest and relieve boredom in the classroom. The group advocated the adoption of a bill of rights for high school students, claiming it "would encourage young people to become responsible and independent members of the community."[38]

The idea for the student bill of rights "grew out of the Constitution."[39] Its proponents sought to give students an equal voice within the school system. However, due to the whole culture of student awareness and the perception of students as an 'oppressed group,' the bill became an issue that citizens rallied both behind and against. Students wanted political, personal, and disciplinary rights that were denied them by school administrators. Politically they wanted the freedom to form organizations and freedom from censorship of school publications and P.A. announcements. Personally they wanted the freedom to wear armbands and buttons and to grow their hair long. "Disciplinary rights included the right to due process regarding the imposition of significant punishments, including an adequate appeals procedure."[40] Though the number of students who pushed for reforms in the high schools was small, "they were a noticeable group" and people listened to them.

A number of Arlington's parents supported student efforts. Ann Broder was one such person. Her eldest son participated in political organizations at Washington-Lee High School, where students were attempting to gain personal freedoms. Recognizing that the school rules were "overly rigid," and "appalled" by the conduct of certain conservative school administrators, Mrs. Broder became deeply involved in trying to change things.[41] During the progressive Hutchins' era, she had attended the University of Chicago at the

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[38]Ibid., page 3.
[39]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 2.
[40]Arlington Student Coalition; Memorandum in Support of Proposals to Arlington County School Board Concerning 1970-71 Budget. Arlington, Virginia, 5 March 1970, page 4.
[41]Broder interview.

age of sixteen with a group of other sixteen-year-olds. Therefore she "naturally felt that the sensible, bright, curious, and energetic students [in Arlington] were a good judge of what they needed to learn, and how and what they would learn."[42] She was on the committee of student rights and responsibilities (later, in 1973 she began an eight year term on the school board).

When the board members set up a committee to investigate the student proposal for a student bill of rights proposal, a conservative group called Concerned Citizens opposed it. The right-wingers did their best to paralyze the investigating process. "Week after week they called points of order, going over the minutes of the previous meeting with a fine tooth comb, insisting that nothing could be done until the minutes had been agreed, and making sure that nothing was discussed except the minutes."[43] Conservatives made a mockery of the Youth Council, and at the local level, political polarization precluded the adoption of a student bill of rights.

Societal divisions were also visible in Arlington's schools, as one situation at Wakefield reflects: "One student was the son of General Daniel Graham, who was the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. The student was really conservative, and he came into class saying 'my dad tells me it's Communists who are organizing these marches against the war.' Another student, the son of the current Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Ward, went out and stood on a bridge trying to block the traffic into D.C. He wanted to shut down the government and stop the Vietnam War. This was the kind of discrepancy you would find in the classroom."[44] There was much diversity in what students and parents wanted, and this weighed heavy on the minds of both the school and county administrators.

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[42]Broder interview.
[43] Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 2.
[44]Anderson interview, 26 January 1996, page 8.

One incident in 1970 illustrates the climate. Jim Massey, a Yorktown High School student and President of the Youth Council, passed out a leaflet urging kids to assemble outside the County Education building on the day of an anti-war rally. The local right-wing got wind of this and exerted pressure on the Commonwealth's Attorney's office which was very much the province of the old Southern community, and Jim was prosecuted for urging children to absent themselves unlawfully from school. Jim's lawyer called in loads of students from the youth movement (15 people, that is) as witnesses to the fact that there was a movement going on and Jim was only a cog in the wheel. The prosecution could only produce one fellow who didn't go to school that day and couldn't say that the leaflet had influenced him at all, and the case was dismissed. But there you have it: young people acting locally and tied in to national issues, opposed by an influential part of the local adult community.[45] Only fifteen students came to Massey's aid, reflecting that the activism did not extend to a large part of the school-going population. It was the fact that the activists were outspoken, optimistic, and part of something bigger, or rather, several bigger things, that made them have the impact they did.

The school board was under fire. In addition to student and parent unrest over the high school situation, the desegregation of the all-black Drew Elementary School in the almost exclusively black Nauck community caused heated debate. In 1970, it was appalling for the school to be segregated. Initial plans to close Drew and bus all of the black students to integrated schools throughout the county were opposed. Nauck community residents wanted their children to go to school close to home, and they did not want to see their neighborhood school closed. Wayne Parks and other members of the Wakefield Student Council joined the Drew community in their opposition. Students recognized two injustices on the part of county administrators. First,

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[45]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, pages 3-4.

Arlington County, home of Stratford Junior High School -- the first school in the state of Virginia to integrate -- had let Drew Elementary fall by the wayside. Ten years later Stratford had integrated in 1959, Drew was still segregated. Second, the county's solution to the problem of desegregating Drew was to close down the black neighborhood school and bus the students out of their community. The black students would not even be bussed to the same school. The school board arbitrarily divided the Nauck community in such a way that some neighbors would be bussed to two different schools. Clearly, the board's plan was not fair. Parks bridged the gap between student dissatisfaction at the high schools and the issue of desegregating Drew Elementary School. He urged that "representative parent and student groups from all aspects of the community work together towards a solution" that would desegregate Drew in a fair and just manner.[46]

In response, the school board studied various alternatives available for desegregating the school. One proposed solution was the establishment of a Model Elementary School in the Drew building. If alternative learning was the trend in education, why not use it in Arlington as a creative way to solve the problem of desegregating Drew? Instead of bussing all of the black children out, the proposal advocated a magnet school that would guarantee a percentage of neighborhood students enrollment and draw white students in. The community petitioned their desegregation plan, and it was taken to both local and state courts.

On the high school front, the Youth Council continued to push educational reform ideas wherever they could, and the Concerned Parents Association continued to check them at every step along the way. The experiments at Free-Form Education were not working. They never lasted longer than a two week period, and it was difficult to break the existing

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[46]Minute Book No.10, Arlington County, Virginia, January 22, 1970, page 219.

structure to implement new policies. Some students needed more structure than the schools were providing and yet others fought the existing structure tooth and nail. Neither the students nor their teachers were content with the situation. The Arlington Educational Association (AEA), the closest thing Arlington has to a Teachers' Union, submitted several different suggestions to the school board in hopes of finding a solution to the problem of educating all students equally well. None seemed viable, and school principals were worried. O.U. Johanson, the principal of Washington-Lee, used to call Jeff Kallen into his office from time to time "just to chat and find out what the 'activists' (his word) were thinking."[47]

Jeff Kallen was the recognized spokesman for many students. Kallen grew up in a household with parents who worked as a US Civil Servant and teacher of political science at a local community college. Both parents were active in Arlington politics, and the 1960 presidential election "was probably not the first time [Jeff] helped [his] parents pass out leaflets."[48] His first protest was in the 6th grade at Taylor Elementary School. Dissatisfied with school lunches, Kallen organized a petition to change them. A nutritionist from the county participated in a discussion of the issue, and the lunches were eventually improved. The system worked! One of his teachers encouraged Jeff and his classmates to write letters to the local newspapers in protest to the treatment of the marchers in Selma, Alabama. The school also held a debate on the Vietnam War -- young children were encouraged to argue national issues.

Steeped in politics, Jeff Kallen continued to be active at Stratford Junior High School, where he became a member of the Arlington Youth Council. In 1970 he was elected president of the group and sat in on "an average of 4.2 committee meetings a week."[49] Through the council he had regular access to

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[47]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 3.
[48]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 1.
[49]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 3.

the school board, and from there Jeff got into the habit of visiting people in the Administration Building. He "could see the Superintendent of Schools almost at the drop of a hat."[50] Kallen would also meet with Associate Superintendent Harold Wilson and talk about the possibility of setting up various types of schools in the county. They discussed the idea of combining "a classical high school, an experimental school, and a foreign language school all on one site, so as to provide a social mix as well as an atmosphere of choice and freedom."[51] Jeff Kallen was a sixteen-year-old high school student. That these discussions took place, and that important adults listened to him, suggest the extraordinary situation in Arlington at the time.

Superintendent Robert Wilson "recognized that things were changing."[52] Having a son at Yorktown High School perhaps made him more sensitive to the needs and wants of students than otherwise would be expected from an administrator in his position. His colleague, Harold Wilson, had an impeccable reputation as an educator throughout the community. In the late fifties "people used to say that there were three systems of education in Arlington. Harold Wilson's at Wakefield High School was one of them."[53] More than the Superintendent, Wilson realized that times had changed and that changes were needed to meet the needs of a new kind of student. The support of these two administrators proved essential in the push for the new school which began in the Spring of 1971.

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[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Steve Kurcis interview.

[53]Broder interview. Patty Hale's system at Taylor Elementary and the Arlington County public school system were the other two systems of education in the county.

# Chapter Two
# The New School Movement

PROPOSAL AND PUSH FOR THE NEW SCHOOL

*Arlington can no longer be content to rest on its laurels and continue to take pride in the faded press clippings that once heralded our once-exemplary school system. The fact is, no significant experimentation or innovation has taken place in Arlington in years; we seem to believe that we have now achieved the ultimate in education. Yet the citizens are rapidly losing faith and patience with our school system; the feeling that something better is possible gets stronger every day. The School Board can go a long way toward restoring Arlington to its former position in education and toward renewing citizen confidence in our educational system by specifically recommending this very small first step toward a modern, creative, and successful school system.*[54]

On March 17, 1971, the Arlington School Board received a memorandum which proposed an "Experimental 'Free High School' to be created by [the] County."[55] A solution to the growing unrest of the community appeared to have been found. The proposal drafted by Ray Anderson, a history teacher at Wakefield High School, was submitted by the Arlington Educational Association.[56]

Ray Anderson came to Arlington County in 1968. After graduating from Penn State, he had worked at the Central Intelligence Agency for four years until he quit after his boss told him to ignore data and "write what the men upstairs in the CIA wanted to hear."[57] Anderson returned to school, earned a master's degree in International Studies and History, and became a certified teacher. He began teaching history at Wakefield during "an intense time at the school."[58] His first year there, he was not very involved. However, during

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[54]Jeff Kallen, Chairman, Citizens' Committee for the New School; Memorandum to the Arlington County School Board, April 1, 1971, page 2-3.
[55]Ibid., page 1.
[56]The AEA had always been involved in liberal politics and it had a strong voice in the local Democratic party. Its submission of such a proposal was therefore in no way shocking, as it might have been in places like Philadelphia and New York, where teachers' unions resisted educational experimentation.
[57]Ray Anderson, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996, page 9.
[58]Ibid.

his second and third years, he became very active. During the 1969-1970 school year Anderson sponsored the student government and began to lead the faculty administration council.

His experience at the CIA prepared Anderson to "tend to distrust and want to change authority."[59] Influenced by the Kurcis report and by what he saw in the halls and classrooms of Wakefield, Ray Anderson helped to organize the teachers and initiate educational experiments in the school. Not all students benefited from the EFFE initiatives, and this concerned Anderson until a colleague pointed out that the "idea behind the projects was for people to participate. They may fail, but the value of their participation was judged more informative and instructive to the students than whether the experiment worked or not."[60] It was a valuable lesson.

Alleviating student unrest and dissatisfaction at Wakefield became a priority to Anderson. Some students needed more structure than the school was currently providing them but others were not yet given enough control over their own education. In December 1970, while driving home from a trip to Pennsylvania, Anderson dictated a four page memo to his wife. "The first half was addressed to Wakefield's principal stressing the need for more structure in the school. And the second half suggested the creation of a new school."[61] This school would be for those students who wanted control over their studies, and instead of being run by a principal, the new school would be governed by students and teachers collectively. When the county announced that several elementary schools would be closing and left vacant the following school year, the timing was optimal, and the proposal was submitted to the school board.

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[59]Ibid.
[60]Ibid., page 10.
[61]Ibid.

Those in the community who sought educational options embraced the proposal immediately. Jeff Kallen and Jean Lichty, a student from Yorktown, were present at the meeting when Anderson announced the proposal and suggested the board take advantage of the closing of small neighborhood schools to set up smaller alternative schools that would cater to alternative demands. Kallen and Lichty were "completely surprised."[62] This was what people had been talking about. The new school would offer students freedom from censorship, freedom to wear their hair long, a smaller and more personalized atmosphere, and a voice in governing the school. Teachers and students would be equals in the learning experience, and flexibility would allow students to design their own courses of study. The demand was there, the desire for educational reform was there, and Ray Anderson had just proposed the means by which to accomplish it.

The following day Jeff Kallen called a meeting of the students, teachers, and parents with whom he had been working throughout the county, and he invited Ray Anderson to join them in discussing the possibility of the "New School." Through the group's political contacts, Anderson's network of teachers, and a "simple hunch that parents of some of the active students would be sympathetic supporters," a mailing list was created, the proposal reworked, and the Citizen's Committee for the New School established.[63] Plans for the experiment grew at a rapid pace, and the energy and excitement of those involved permeated the classrooms of the county. In two weeks, the ad hoc citizen's group organized a base of support and submitted another, more elaborate memorandum to the school board on April 1, 1971. The new proposal challenged Arlington's "once-exemplary school system." It outlined the necessary organization for the implementation, curriculum, and economic

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[62]Jeff Kallen, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 22 February 1996, page 3.
[63]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 4.

considerations of the new school that would ensure its purpose to: "make the individual student responsible for his own education."[64] Years of student activism paved the way for a willingness within the now liberal Arlington administrative community to consider such a proposal.

On April 1, 1971, a more elaborate proposal submitted by Jeffrey Kallen, Chairman of the Citizens' Committee for the New School, advocated plans for an "open-attendance experimental high school."[65] All students and teachers interested in a less rigid and more experimental situation would be encouraged to transfer to the school. The school community would consist of the students and teachers of the school, and it would regulate and direct its own activities through a governing council. The governing council would create curriculum objectives, coordinate in-school and out-of-school activities, and carry out those duties normally assigned the principal of a high school. The curriculum would meet all state and county regulations, although the course offerings within required disciplines would offer choices.

Led by Kallen, the committee tested the School Board's historical resolve to reform. This young kid was coordinating and leading a group of adults in Arlington. He was moving an entire county to momentous action. On April 15, *The Washington Post* ran a story highlighting Jeff Kallen, the audacious student activist, and the community's push to reform local education. The article quoted students in favor of the New School and revealed student boredom in traditional classrooms. "Sitting in an 11-by-15 foot classroom for 56 minutes each day for certain students was just not educating a person. At most, it just produced a high school student with 16 credits for graduation."[66]

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[64]Jeff Kallen, Chairman, Citizens' Committee for the New School; Memorandum to the Arlington County School Board, April 1, 1971, page 1-2.
[65]Ibid., page 1.
[66]Nancy Scannell. "Students Work Work Program." *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1971, page G2.

The article was clipped, made into a flyer advocating the New School, and distributed throughout the community.

The Committee continued to meet at Kallen's house, and support for the New School continued to grow. Advocates of establishing a Model Elementary School at Drew joined forces with the Citizens' Committee for the New School. Similar to the proposal for the new school, the alternative for elementary school students stressed "a continually changing curriculum in response to children's needs."[67] Both groups sought a more personalized education in a more humane atmosphere. The activists in favor of educational reform supported one another and formed a strong coalition of opposition to the existing school system.

In addition, parents on the Citizen's Committee used their political clout to lobby School Board members. "They played a significant role in finessing the politics and networking to get the board to approve the proposal."[68] Jeff Kallen and Ray Anderson lobbied Superintendent Chisholm and Associate Superintendent Wilson, whom they hoped would support their proposal. Familiar with the inner workings of the school system, Anderson organized the preparation of draft documents to start the school. A complete packet containing advertisements for job vacancies, student applications, and a list of locations to house the school was taken to the Administration Building and given to the Superintendent.

On April 23, 1971, Superintendent Robert Chisholm sent a memorandum to the members of the school board, endorsing the proposal to establish an experimental high school. The Citizen's Committee for the New School had told him their plan and provided a packet of necessary information as to how they would implement the school if it was approved. The Superintendent described

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[67]Nancy Houghtaling. Status Report on Alternative Schools, Arlington, Virginia, June 15, 1979, page 2.
[68]Anderson interview, page 32.

the "establishment of a small, open-attendance, experimental high school as interesting for at least two reasons:

a. those students admitted to the new school would be committed to making it successful, would probably work harder at the process of education, and quite likely would be better satisfied than with the more conventional program.
b. the small experimental school might model some activities and processes that could be incorporated into the regular high school."[69]

Superintendent Chisholm added a few suggestions to the proposal. He recommended the establishment of a "quota from each of the existing high schools to be filled by lottery ... to best assure an open school,"[70] and the recognition of a head teacher who would be responsible to the county government and take on responsibilities similar to those of a school principal. Finally, Chisholm recommended that "as much latitude as possible be afforded the new school" and effectively handed his comments to the members of the School Board.[71]

The preliminary word from the school board was favorable, and promotion for the school continued throughout Arlington. Yet resistance loomed large. The initial conservative response was to oppose the idea of a new school. If passed, it would spell victory for the opposition, and perhaps a new program would threaten the existing high school structure. However, conservatives began to see the establishment of a new school as a convenient way to rid the traditional schools of the trouble-makers, or "longhairs as they were often called," and leave the mainstream schools to be full of more mainstream students.[72] If the trouble makers did attend the new school as

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[69]Robert Chisholm; Memorandum to the Members of the School Board, Arlington, Virginia, April 23, 1971.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Ibid.
[72]Steve Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 8 March 1996.

expected, the traditional schools would have time to regain control over the student population. The new school was an attractive alternative after all.

While the proposal was gaining support in the conservative camp, tensions arose between the members of the Citizens' Committee for the New School. There was dissent as to how far the group was going to go in implementing an alternative system. "How extreme of an alternative was there going to be?"[73] The 'radicals' wanted extreme experimentation, as opposed to the 'conservatives' who simply wanted an option to the existing structure. The group successfully masked its division and continued to unanimously support the proposal, but its consensus was lost and the committee would eventually split.

On May 3, 1971, the Citizens' Committee sent another revised proposal to the School Board. Three days later, May 6, they followed it up with an oral presentation. Ten members of the Citizen's Committee, including four students, three parents, and three teachers, spoke before the School Board of the need to establish a program of alternative education in Arlington. The Board accepted the "concept of a small new experimental high school and requested the Superintendent to present recommendations concerning the establishment of this school at its next meeting."[74]

Four days later, on May 10, the Superintendent drafted a 12-point memorandum to the School Board recommending the New School be considered. There were several stipulations to the Citizens' Committee's proposal: New School had to meet requirements of the State Board, the School Board, and the regional accrediting association with regard to curriculum and graduation. These requirements limited the experimental nature of the

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[73]Anderson interview, page 18.
[74]Robert Chisholm; Memorandum to the Members of the School Board, May 10, 1971.

proposed program, but they were embraced by the conservatives and certainly accepted by the advocates of the New School.

Once the right wing was satisfied and the school managers agreed on finance, the School Board was able to return to its liberal inclinations, and it accepted the proposal. On May 21, 1971, Associate Superintendent Harold Wilson drafted the News Release. The Arlington County School Board approved the proposal for a non-traditional "experimental" school by a 5-0 vote. It would open in September of the following academic year. Wilson announced:

> The excellent school system that Arlington has enjoyed for two decades was not achieved by resting on past accomplishments. The future of the Arlington County Public Schools must rest on continuing efforts to keep in touch with the changing needs and goals of society, and to relate classroom experience to the life the student will lead after graduation.
>
> Recently, strong public support has emerged for the theory that the traditionally structured classroom approach, while satisfactory for many students, is not necessarily the only approach to obtaining a basic education. Partially in response to many requests for alternative learning approaches, Arlington will offer in 1971-72: THE NEW SCHOOL, A CHOICE.[75]

At last the months of community meetings, lobbying, and propaganda were over. The New School was going to become a reality. Woodlawn, as it would be named, was to begin in the fall of the coming school year.

In just two months time the board accepted the proposal for the New School. The years of Youth Council meetings and experiments in education laid the groundwork for the proposal of the New School when its time came. The citizens of Arlington County, Virginia, mobilized themselves at the local level and reformed their system of education. Woodlawn was the result of their combined grassroots efforts and the national trend toward change.

In the Spring of 1971, the school board passed the proposal that established Woodlawn, and the courts approved the desegregation plan that established Drew Model School. Designed to meet the needs of the students,

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[75]Harold Wilson, Associate Superintendent of Public Schools. News Release, Arlington, Virginia, May 21, 1971.

each was a laboratory to test new educational methods, strategies, and curricula. For the first time ever, Arlington offered alternatives to its traditional system of education. In an era where change was the tradition a new one began.

Preparation for Woodlawn began immediately. Flyers advertising the program circulated in the county high schools, and Superintendent Chisholm searched for a head teacher to run the project. Ray Anderson was an obvious choice, and by the first of June he was hired for the job. He had been involved with the project from the very beginning and was a prominent figure in seeing his initial proposal through. His experience teaching history and government at Wakefield, and his participation in EFFE projects made him a viable candidate as well.

Administratively, Anderson's role as head teacher was not unlike that of a school principal, yet the title did moderate "the fear that many had of an ordinary principal at the school."[76] The head teacher was the one person to whom people both in and out of Woodlawn turned for administrative matters. Past experience with double entry book keeping and mutual funds helped Anderson maintain the financial accounts and budget reports that he would be responsible for once Woodlawn began. It was also his duty to take care of the day-to-day logistical problems and report to the Arlington School Board Administration.

In each of Arlington's high schools, all rising eleventh and twelfth graders in Arlington received a leaflet on the program from their guidance counselor. When a student and his/her parents decided to apply for admission to the new school, they filled out a parental permission form and teacher discussion form, and the student's name was entered into a lottery. The

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[76]Jeff Kallen, Chairman, Citizens' Committee; Memorandum recommending the New School to the Arlington County School Board, May 3, 1971; page 3.

parental permission form acknowledged that the parents had been fully informed about the new school, that they understood its highly experimental nature, and that they allowed the student (if selected) to attend the school starting the following academic year. The teacher discussion form indicated that the student had discussed his/her interest in and understanding of the new school with three teachers and a guidance counselor, all of whom signed the form indicating that the discussions had taken place. The attention given the application process was not an administrative initiative to protect itself shou!d a student perform badly at the new school. Rather, it was implemented to ensure a student population that sought educational options. Students were not sent to Woodlawn, they wanted to go there. When both forms were complete and returned to the guidance counselor, the information was forwarded to Anderson in anticipation of the Superintendent's stipulated lottery.

In theory the lottery would assure an equal proportion of students from each of the three high schools. Fifty students were to come from Wakefield, fifty from Washington-Lee, and fifty from Yorktown. An additional thirty spaces were left open specifically for minority students to ensure a student body that would be representative of the community at large. However, in practice, the lottery system was not implemented. By June 7, 1971, 191 applications were received for the 180 student spaces, and all applicants were allowed to participate in the program, without regard to home school affiliation or minority status.[77]

Students at Woodlawn would retain affiliation with their home schools. Officially they were Wakefield, Washington-Lee, and Yorktown students participating in the Woodlawn Program. The alternative was smaller than its

[77]Fewer than five minority applications were received. Though this was not an issue in 1971, it would be addressed by the community and the school board in the late eighties.

traditional counterparts, and students would return to the home schools for drivers education, chemistry, band and other extra-curricular activities. Woodlawn was not an accredited high school in Virginia, and so class rank and an official diploma were also processed at the traditional schools. Though no rivalry existed between Woodlawn and the traditional high schools, an "us" and "them" mentality was apparent from the very beginning of the 1971-1972 school year.

With the student body selected, Ray Anderson wasted no time in planning the organization of Woodlawn. A master filing card system to facilitate communication with the students was prepared, and a plan of operation for the summer months was developed.[78] The urgency was the result of circumstance. Ray Anderson was to leave the country with his wife Sarah on June 21 - August 4, for a trip to the Soviet Union. They had been planning the trip for two years, and the travel and room accommodations had been paid before Anderson was selected as the new school's head teacher. Therefore, to keep his job and still make the trip he had to work quickly.

Associate Superintendent Harold Wilson afforded Anderson flexibility. The new school was developed in informal connection with the county administration and the school board. Harold Wilson was one administrator who could have stopped the proposal if he had wanted to. Yet he did not oppose it. To the contrary, Harold Wilson was a long-time, behind-the-scenes supporter of the alternative program. He had discussed the possibility of setting up various types of schools in the community with Jeff Kallen before the proposal for the new school existed. Once it was written, his was a powerful voice in support of the program. No doubt his influence helped speed the school

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[78]Ray Anderson. Letter to Associate Superintendent Wilson, Arlington, Virginia, June 11, 1971, page 2.

board's acceptance of the new school, and Wilson would continue to support Woodlawn and its head teacher throughout his career.

Wilson and Anderson worked closely with one another over the proposal for the new school, and the administrator "trusted the head teacher implicitly."[79] Anderson said that he would make all of the necessary preparations for Woodlawn before he left for the summer, and he did. By June 14, he hired the seven other teachers who came to Woodlawn the first year: Paula Banta, Amos Houghton, Ellen Kurcis, David Lloyd, David McIntyre, Doris Pulliam, and Adelaide Rusch. "All had teaching experience in the county, all were excited to be involved in something new," and all of the teachers were chosen because they wanted to be there.[80]

That the head teacher alone selected the teachers suggests not only his relative control over the program, but also a staff with educational views similar to his own. This is not to say that the teachers were mere puppets of Anderson. Rather, the staff as a group shared the belief that they could create a better program of education than currently existed in Arlington.

Teachers at Woodlawn were willing to view their students as partners in education. To that end, they accepted the First-Name Policy which stipulated that students call the teachers by their first names. The staff also supported Town Meeting where everyone - students and teachers alike - had one equal vote in the decision making of the school. Beyond these symbolic gestures, teachers had high hopes for creating a curriculum with their students once school began.

Of course some sort of planning was required of the teachers before September. Over the summer a file of potential internship positions for

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[79]Harold Wilson, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2 April 1996.
[80]Ellen Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 23 February 1996.

students was prepared and the staff discussed the possibilities for the program. Teachers "came for the opportunity to create new educational programs without the usual restrictions of the traditional high school."[81] Most had participated in the county's EFFE projects, and they drew on those past experiences when outlining Woodlawn's curriculum. Doris Pulliam, an English teacher who had worked with Anderson at Wakefield, suggested that the elective program created at Wakefield be used at Woodlawn. David Lloyd advocated innovative ways of studying physics and math, and David McIntyre had his own ideas about the foreign languages courses. Naturally each teacher had his/her own idea about how to creatively run his/her own classroom. None, however, were limited by their own ideas, and all of the teachers waited to establish the course offerings until September when the students arrived.

Naturally, students like Jeff Kallen remained involved after the proposal was accepted. However, there was a temporary lull in activity. Six days before the proposal for the new school was accepted, on the night of May 15, 1971, Jeff Kallen and Ellen Shuman, both of whom would attend Woodlawn, were on the Mall when they struck down by a hit and run driver between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The accident was tragic, and "the two were lucky to survive."[82] Some speculate that the incident gave an impetus to the school board to accept the new school proposal, stating that "it probably would have taken them longer if it hadn't been for the accident."[83] What is certain is that the most visible figure in the movement for the experimental high school lost his political momentum. Students lost their recognized leader. The Citizens' Committee for the New School finally

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[81]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, Arlington, Virginia, August 17, 1972, page 5.
[82]Ann Broder, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 9 March 1996.
[83]Ibid.

split when Anderson, who was a member of the conservative majority of the group, became Woodlawn's head teacher. He then left the country, and with Kallen in recovery further planning for Woodlawn was temporarily shelved.

In August preparations resumed. Ray Anderson returned to Arlington, Jeff Kallen recovered from his accident, and the energy and enthusiasm that was manifested in the movement for the new school proposal returned as well. School was about to begin. No one knew what to expect, and no one knew if the Program would be successful, they all wanted Woodlawn to work. The first step was to send a 'greetings' letter and Woodlawn Program Handbook to all incoming students. Then, an initiative was launched to involve everyone in organizing the physical aspect of the school building. Some of the teachers, with contributions from students, painted their classrooms, and others helped Anderson "build partitions and pick up donated pianos and potential library materials."[84] A significant part of the Woodlawn population participated in the start-up activities, and this set the stage for the sense of community that developed during the school year.

Twenty students were lost before school began. Some moved out of the county over the summer, and others decided to stay at their 'home' schools. One Wakefield High School student who dropped out of the program during the summer wrote a letter to Jeff Kallen explaining her decision:

> *Jeff -*
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> *I dropped the Woodlawn Project for various reasons. As I explained to Mr. Anderson - my parents unwillingly signed the form last spring hoping that I would change my mind during the summer. Since I didn't completely change my mind they recommended that I reconsider. So part of my withdrawal reasons was that I don't want my parents' disapproval hanging over my head all year.*
>
> *My other reasons are that I don't want to give up Drama and Nat[ional] Honor So[ciety] at Wakefield. Also - I am unimpressed with the amount of organization at Woodlawn. One more reason is that college admissions officers were unimpressed with "any <u>experimental</u> high school!" Lastly - the people at Woodlawn are not the people I would seek out to associate with at Wakefield. I prefer the broader cross section at Wakefield.*

[84]Kallen interview, 26 February 1996, page 2.

The example indicates the different pressures that the alternative program faced. Parents were worried that their students would have difficulty getting into college if they attended an experimental school. To some the program did not seem to be well organized, and they may have doubted its success. Because of its small size, Woodlawn was not able to offer all of the classes and extra-curricular activities that the traditional schools had disappointing some students. Others felt they would be more comfortable in a mainstream social setting. Many students who may have opposed the rules at the traditional schools were not willing to leave the security that an established structure provided them. Perhaps the pressures against the school would be too great for it to succeed. The "100 student applications for admission that were received after the initial deadline in June,"[86] suggest otherwise. There was a demand for an alternative high school in Arlington.

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[85]Kelly - a Wakefield High School student. Letter to Jeff Kallen, Arlington, Virginia, September 1971.

[86]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, page 2.

# Chapter Three
# The Woodlawn Program: Its First Year

The Woodlawn Program opened its doors on September 7, 1971 with 171 eleventh and twelfth grade senior high school students. As stated in the proposal, "the basic philosophical assumption underlying the creation of the school was that some high school students are capable of assuming primary direction over their own education."[87] Woodlawn students were indeed provided the opportunity to take that responsibility.

Teachers did not teach "down" to their students. Both shared in the learning experience. Internships, independent work, and interdisciplinary courses cut across traditional lines, and students themselves worked to develop educational programs for Woodlawn. Not only did students want to change things in Arlington's public school system, they continued to participate in the educational process that followed the establishment of Woodlawn. Students did not just want to gripe about what they did not have, they wanted to develop new courses and they wanted to remain involved. Not surprisingly, Jeff Kallen was among the more active students in this endeavor. As seniors, he and Bill Hale tried out several "radical revisions of the curriculum in terms of guiding foci, educational milestones, and educational contracts which would emphasize independent study and break down traditional disciplines."[88]

One proposal included a curriculum that was based on different course disciplines: Man's Institutions, Physical Phenomenon, and Self-Expression. There would be no formal classes and no regular subjects. Instead, individuals would contract to do certain things and then be judged by their progress. The idea involved students keeping a journal of the different activities they did each day. If a student worked on a political campaign for one hour, he received one hour's worth of credit for Man's Institutions. If, for two hours he played a game of billiards, a student would experience first-hand how Newton

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[87]A student publication. "Why Naught," Arlington, Virginia, September 1971, page 1.
[88]Kallen interview, 26 February 1996, page 5.

himself came to understand the scientific theories involving force and reaction, and he would earn credit for two hours of Physical Phenomenon.

There was obviously a significant amount of idealism built into the possibilities students had at the school. However, state and county regulations together with Anderson's practicality prevented radical experimentation from taking place. The head teacher posed questions to his students: How do we keep official records of these courses? What course code will be used for Man's Institutions? How will Self-Expression fulfill the English requirement? Anderson was not opposed to student initiatives. If students could solve the problems of meeting regulations, they could proceed with their innovative curricular ideas. However, he did not advocate total experimentation at Woodlawn because to him that was not what the program was about.

While others spoke of an experimental school, Anderson talked about an alternative program. In the context of the times this difference did not amount to much since both concepts allowed for something other than the mainstream school. The disparity did amount to a big difference in terms of what the school could and could not do, what it could hope to achieve, and how it would achieve things. As the Kallen/Hale proposal suggests, some students at Woodlawn had radically experimental ideas about education. For them, the ideal of the New School was replaced by the reality of Woodlawn.

Two limitations were imposed on the new curriculum being developed at Woodlawn: the aforementioned state and county regulations, which had to be met for graduation recognition, and the promise of an education designed to meet individual student preferences. No two students were alike at Woodlawn, and a significant amount of the school population was not interested in radical experimentation. Those who wanted to try new and experimental things were certainly allowed to do so, but they received no more encouragement than the

student who preferred a more traditional education in a non-traditional atmosphere.

A large bulletin board in the front hall had a chart showing when and what courses were offered each week. Instead of the rigid period structure of the traditional high school Woodlawn adopted three modes of teaching/learning: 1) large-group presentations, 2) small group discussions, and 3) independent study.[89] Formal classes in any course met no more than three times a week, which allowed students to structure their free time in whatever way they chose to do so. Large group presentations never exceeded twenty students, and most classes had less than ten students each, which allowed students a voice in deciding the operation of each classroom. Independent study, then, offered students total freedom in education.

Relationships between Woodlawn students and their home school peers varied with the individual. For those who returned daily for sports practice or chemistry class, the home schools were still very much a part of their lives. Some students also remained close friends with students at the home school, while others left and never returned. For Jeff Kallen, "Washington-Lee represented all that he had opposed during the years leading up to Woodlawn," and he rarely returned.[90] The mainstream student did not come to Woodlawn because it was not a mainstream school.

Students came to the school for many reasons. Some came to Woodlawn for the academic freedom the program proposed to offer. Independent study worked well for this type of individual. Bill Hale, a senior at Woodlawn during its first year, explained that students were given "a chance to set up their milestones for the year and to choose the means by which to achieve them. For instance, if a student wanted to receive a credit in government he could

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[89]A student publication. "Why Naught," page 2.
[90]Kallen interview, 26 February 1996, page 3.

work in a congressional office and gain some meaningful insight into the workings of government instead of sitting in a classroom for 53 minutes each day."[91] Elisa Stacy was attracted to Woodlawn because of its flexible curriculum policy. As a junior she "wanted to take a survey of English Literature, but at Yorktown [she] wouldn't be allowed to take it until [she] was a senior."[92]

Other students were attracted by the advantages of having a small school rather than a large one. They may have suffered from lack of motivation, or had difficulty adapting to discipline. When Mark Osmun of the *Arlington News* visited Woodlawn to get an inside look at a 'free-form' high school he sat in on a French III class that "had a total enrollment of five students," which provided "exceptional student-teacher attention."[93] Students were given the opportunity to get to know their teacher and the learning process was personalized. David McIntyre, the foreign language teacher, finished teaching classes at 11:00 a.m. He had the rest of the day to help students individually. He felt his efforts were "more effective teaching a few students in a small classroom setting, than trying to teach many large classes where two-thirds of the students may be sleeping."[94]

"The emphasis at Woodlawn was on providing an alternative environment."[95] Toward that end, teachers contributed immensely. Adelaide Rusch, the part-time art teacher/part-time office secretary, inspired individuality in students. In addition to involving non-artistic students in the art craft by having them restore old chairs or work on woodcarving, "Ma

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[91]Staff Writer. "'New School' Opens Today." *Northern Virginia Sun*, September 7, 1971.
[92]Mark Osmun. "Experimental School Under Way." *Arlington News*, November 23, 1971.
[93]Ibid.
[94]Ibid.
[95]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, Arlington, Virginia, August 17, 1972, page 3.

Rusch," as she was called, was an unofficial counselor to students on various personal matters. "She provided a good atmosphere for people to talk about anything and everything, and she always had a coterie of art students and hangers-on."[96] David McIntyre was very popular with the school's language enthusiasts. He taught six different languages, and he was always very enthusiastic about each of them. His enthusiasm rubbed off on his students who would frequently stay after class to practice their speaking skills. David Lloyd, who taught both physics and math, worked in a very creative way. In the first year Woodlawn had no science lab whatsoever. He "would do things like make lab equipment. Then when students were done they would throw the 'equipment' away because they didn't have the necessary materials to actually use it, but they would have learned what the equipment was supposed to test."[97] *Arlington News* reporter Mark Osmun observed that "by joking and abandoning formal mannerisms, Lloyd appeared to be able to make students forget that they were listening to a physics 'lecture.' Beyond using a causal approach to engage his students, Lloyd nudged them towards independent research claiming 'that he was not sure of the laws of physics, and that if anyone could prove any of them he'd be really interested to hear about it.'"[98] Though unconventional and non-traditional, teaching methods at Woodlawn worked. Not only did students open up to the arts and voluntarily spend free time speaking a second language, but they also found that learning was fun.

Credit/no credit courses encouraged students to explore a wider range of subjects. This type of grading allowed students to take courses that they were interested in without being penalized with a bad grade if the subject was too difficult. "Credit/no credit meant that if a course was completed successfully,

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[96]Kallen interview, 2 March 1996, page 2.
[97]Anderson interview, page 40.
[98]Mark Osmun. "Experimental School Under Way." *Arlington News*, November 23,1971.

it would show up on the student's report card and give him/her credit for it. If, however, a student did badly (that means failed), no record would ever appear of a student taking that course."[99] Woodlawn was required to give a letter grade (A,B,C,D,E,I) for the state required courses (English 11 and 12, History and Government, but all other courses could be either for a letter grade or credit/no credit. Each student made the decision himself.

Similarly, the teachers at Woodlawn had freedom to make decisions for themselves. Each teacher ran his/her class differently. Classes like English and history were very flexible. The Elective Program, in particular, enabled students to vary from the prescribed courses of English and Social Studies to take innovative topics such as creative writing, revolutions, yoga, and the political process. "Students were offered as much freedom as they desired to modify the large-group instruction of their classes."[100]

One example of the options available to the students at Woodlawn was an interdisciplinary course on the woman's movement. Largely based on the literature of Betty Friedan, D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, and Germaine Greer, the course studied the significance of the movement in contemporary American society through assigned readings and ensuing discussions. The course also included invited speakers such as a woman lawyer, a man from personnel in one of the airlines, and a woman from a lesbian movement. It was partly literature, partly history, and partly social studies - not a bad interdisciplinary course, and very fitting for the times.[101]

Math classes, however, did not adapt easily to the individualized learning environment at Woodlawn. They operated very much like the courses given at any other high school. Paula Banta's Algebra/Trigonometry

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[99]Blair Reischer. Woodlawn Program Handbook, Arlington, Virginia, June 1975, page 1.
[100]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, page 5.
[101]Jeff Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 3.

class was "conducted almost identically with the 'normal' high school course. Students factored polynomials and listened to the theories behind the processes."[102] What was alternative about the class was the teacher's attitude toward her students. She did not hound them to do the assigned work; instead, the decision was left entirely up to the student. At Woodlawn students were expected to behave responsibly. "At first some of the students had to get adjusted to the increased responsibility, but for the most part, students [at Woodlawn] let themselves learn more."[103]

Self-discipline and self-motivation were stressed at Woodlawn. Students managed their school work, and their free time without continuous adult supervision. Instead of a system of rules governing their use of time and behavior, Woodlawn students were accountable for the consequences of their actions. Some students left school to work at real jobs and make money. Others like David Tarttar chose to spend their free time on special interests "like working on the school newsletter."[104] Of course not all of the students used their free time productively. Some did abuse their freedoms at Woodlawn, but "the majority of the students were genuinely interested in learning" and in exploring new ways in which to learn.[105]

Everyone was on equal footing at Woodlawn. Attendance was not checked daily; instead, it operated on the honor system. "It was up to the student to go to the office and record any absence(s)."[106] The honor system was also a component of Woodlawn's grading policy. Students and teachers met at the end of each quarter to discuss what grade each student deserved. The

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[102]Mark Osmun. "Experimental School Under Way." *Arlington News*, November 23, 1971.
[103]Ibid.
[104]Ibid.
[105]Ellen Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 23 February 1996.
[106]Blair Reischer. Woodlawn Program Handbook, page 2.

teacher gave a grade and the student graded himself, and then the two compared notes. "Generally the student graded himself harder than the teacher," but if there was a conflict, a discussion ensued until both parties reached agreement.

Some of Woodlawn's political students used their free time to become involved in Virginia's nominating convention in the Fall of 1971. The political students "supported McGovern who was running on an anti-war platform. They went to a local attorney whom one of the parents knew, and they got some office space, and they ran an office. If they could help start a school, surely they could help run a political campaign,"[107] and they did. The students approached Ray Anderson and asked him and his wife to run as. delegates to the State Democratic Convention because they needed more support. Ray said "okay, and [his wife] Sarah said that she would do it, and so the students put together a slate and organized for Arlington's convention that May."[108]

Of the 104 delegates and 35 alternates that Arlington sent to the state Democratic convention at Roanoke on June 4-10, 1972, a "total of 17 delegates and 2 alternates were Woodlawn supporters. Among that group [were] 11 Woodlawn students (nine delegates and two alternates), Ray and Sarah Anderson (both delegates), 3 Woodlawn parents (all delegates), and 3 other friends of Woodlawn (all delegates)."[109] The Woodlawn gang drove Ray's Volkswagen Bus down to Roanoke for the Convention with "big 6x6 posters covering the windows which read 'Power to the People' and 'Stop the War.'"[110] The next day's headline on the local newspaper was a picture of the car with

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[107]Anderson interview, 26 January 1996, page 21.
[108]Anderson interview, page 22-23.
[109]A student publication. *The Woodlawn Canoas*, May 1972.
[110]Anderson interview, page, 23-24.

the headline: "McGovern Radicals invade Roanoke."[111] Though this episode was not typical, particularly after the first year, the story does illustrate how students created options for themselves within Woodlawn's flexible learning environment. The episode also reveals the types of relationships that were forged between the students and teachers at Woodlawn. In many cases they were friends.

The relationships made in the classroom extended outside of them. Ellen Kurcis had a few of her students over to help her and her husband Steve decorate their Christmas tree. Outside of school David Lloyd and his wife were involved in consciousness raising discussions with students on women's rights, relationships, and sexuality. Student/teacher relationships were loosely defined at the time, and because the age difference between them was so slight it was easy for friendships to develop. Some staff even felt comfortable stopping by student parties for a beer.[112]Though such unorthodox relationships would be scorned at the end of the century, they were permissible in the early seventies.

Early on in the program Ray Anderson made an impassioned speech to the school warning all participants of the experiment to act responsibly. He encouraged student and faculty innovation and energy. He commended the Woodlawn community on the progress it had made up to that point. He also addressed his concerns with regard to the future of the program. "If the school closed down," he said, "because no one was learning that would be okay. That would be a valid reason to close the program. But if Woodlawn was closed because some students 'hot rodded' their car down the small neighborhood street, or because someone brought drugs into the school and was caught, the school would be closed because of the Woodlawn community's stupidity, and

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[111]Roanoke Times, June 10, 1972.

[112]The legal drinking age in Virginia was 18. The State Assembly did not change that law until 1986.

that would not be okay."[113] Anderson implored everyone to be on their best behavior, and they all were.

Students and teachers alike protected the "special place" that they created.[114] "Most of the students the first year took the school very seriously, because [they] built it, and it was [theirs.]"[115] Students themselves enforced the only one rule at Woodlawn which was the county-wide 'no smoking in the school building' rule. Town Meeting designated one of the three phones in the building as the student phone to be used for local calls. After the school received a large phone bill from long-distance calls that were made from the student phone, the culprit was temporarily ostracized by the rest of the student population for breaching the confidence of the student phone. The students created the school, and they were dedicated to making it work.

Town Meeting was the official forum that gave students a voice at Woodlawn. The weekly meetings were open to all participants of the program: students, teachers, and parents, and each person was allowed one equal vote. At the beginning of each week the TM agenda was posted on the wall outside the office. Anyone who had anything to be discussed was free to write the issue on the agenda. A chairman was selected from among those who volunteered and any new issues were added before the proceedings began.[116] TM discussed everything from the hiring of new teachers to setting up the date for a school fund-raiser.

Perhaps the most significant decision the group make the first year was the addition of Advanced Placement (AP) courses to the curriculum. Students enjoyed AP classes at their traditional schools, and they wanted to have them at

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[113]Anderson interview, page 54.
[114]Ibid.
[115]Blair Reischer, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1996, page 4.
[116]The chairman was usually a Woodlawn student. However, teachers did sometimes fill the role.

Woodlawn as well. The chairman announced the topic, a discussion followed, then a student made a motion, and another seconded it before a majority "yea" (vs. a "nay") passed the motion and AP classes in English and History were added to Woodlawn's curricula for the following year.

The decision-making body was judged by the Woodlawn community "to work quite well" that first year.[117] In only two instances did students question the lack of involvement by TM in a decision made by the head teacher. In both cases the "head teacher explained that he made many such decisions each day, but that the town meeting could over-rule or revise any decision he made because it alone was the fundamental policy making body of the school."[118] Anderson's response appeased those who feared he exercised too much power, and TM always had the final word.

"Upon entering the Woodlawn plant, a visitor found quickly that things were different."[119] In the nine classrooms, students sat on pillows or on the carpeted floor and took notes while their teachers lectured.[120] In addition, various projects reflected the school's make-do spirit. In the Winter, students realized that a coat room was needed. In order to make it easy to find coats a hat-check type of system was tried. Hangers had tabs on them (the hard plastic closing tabs that hold together the plastic wrapper on a loaf of bread) which would be marked and correlated to the tab and given to the coat owner by whoever was checking in coats at the time. The idea did not work very well or for very long, but it is an example of what kinds of innovative things students were doing.[121]

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[117]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, 17 August 1972, page 6.
[118]Ibid.
[119]Staff Writer. "'New School' Opens Today." *Northern Virginia Sun*, September 7, 1971.
[120]It should be noted that there were chairs and couches for the more conventional students and increased personal comfort.
[121]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 3.

In the Spring of 1972, all internal indicators pointed to a successful year of operation. Although long hair and barefeet may have offended some, student behavior never threatened the school's existence. Seniors met all necessary requirements for graduation, and student response was positive. In the report on the first year of operation that was prepared by Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen, "eighty-five percent of the Woodlawn students felt they had learned more than they would have at a traditional school. The program helped them to develop greater self-confidence and had been effective in creating opportunities for self-realization and understanding. Seventy-seven percent of the students identified with Woodlawn as a personal, intimate, friendly, healthy, unique place to be. In the best use of the word, Woodlawn was a family."[122]

The completion of its first year of operation did not generate new critics of the alternative program, and the only negative comments made came from the school's constant opposition within the Arlington school system. "There was a little discontent and a little grumbling," but no one ever went to the school board to try and close down Woodlawn."[123] These critics never organized into a block of concrete opposition, and their individual complaints never seriously threatened the school. The conservatives were preoccupied with the renovation of Washington-Lee High School, and proposals to adopt classes on business and capitalism in the mainstream classrooms. Woodlawn was simply not important enough for them to want to organize in order to try and close the school down.

Permissive administrators contributed to Woodlawn's success that first year. Lack of direct supervision allowed the alternative program to develop according to the ideals of the students and teachers involved, rather than as a

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[122]Ibid., page 8-9.
[123]Harold Wilson, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2 April 1996.

response to outside pressures. Superintendent Chisholm "and his whole cabinet walked in the back door the first week of school. They stood and watched TM for about 5 minutes, then they turned around, walked out, and never came back."[124] From the very beginning the school was allowed virtual autonomy in its operation.

Associate Superintendent Wilson also advocated the Superintendent's policy. The school board had accepted the proposal for the new school and the administrator believed that "Woodlawn should be allowed to run free of outside interference to see what the school would produce."[125] As a result the central office did not bother Anderson when he failed to attend high school principal meetings. After all, he was not officially a principal. Instead, informal meetings between the head teacher and associate superintendent remained a suitable substitute.

Though unconventional and non-traditional, the Woodlawn Program proved itself in the 1971-1972 school year. Parents often expressed their appreciation for the positive responses they saw in their children, who judged themselves "more mature, more independent, more stable, and more outgoing as a result of attending Woodlawn."[126] Many also believed the Program was a good transition from high school to college.

Woodlawn received many visitors from many parts of the east coast including: HEW officials, a high school principal from Georgia, college students and professors from Virginia, New Hampshire, Maryland and Pennsylvania who were curious about the new alternative. Newspaper articles were written about Woodlawn in the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Star*, the *Washington Daily News*, and the *Northern Virginia Sun*. Overall the

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[124]Anderson interview, page 42.
[125]Ibid., page 55.
[126]Ray Anderson and Jeff Kallen. *The Woodlawn Program: Report on the First Year of Operation*, page 2.

school was a source of favorable publicity for the Arlington County schools.[127]

The response was so favorable, in fact, that a group of parents went to the school board and asked for an alternative at the junior high school level. Both Woodlawn and Drew Model School received favorable reviews, and with alternatives at the elementary and high school levels, parents wanted an alternative at the junior high school level as well.

Anderson's concept of an alternative program, with its undertones of libertarianism and its lack of commitment to remodeling the whole concept of education, proved itself in 1972, and has since proven to fit better with the goal of setting up an institution to endure at the secondary school level within the Virginia public school system.

Woodlawn was allowed to continue its program of alternative education. The school year ended with an informal graduation ceremony. Students and teachers read poetry, and the graduates each received a diploma that two of the seniors designed themselves. The diploma did not have a state seal, and it was not signed by a county administrator. It was simply a picture of the front of the Woodlawn building with the words: "Not with sorrow, not with joy, but with a little bit of each, we leave."

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[127]Ibid., page 7.

# Chapter Four
# Woodlawn: The Middle Years

*William "Billy" Holesburg - Billy was a custodian at Woodlawn when it was still an elementary school. He then became an important figure at the alternative high school until he transferred to retain his job security. Before he left, the Woodlawn Yearbook Staff asked him this question:*

*Q: Do you remember your first impression of "The New School?"*

*A: Yes. I was working in the building and in came Ray and his wife. I took one look at him in his beard and sandals and all and called my supervisor to tell him I wasn't working with any h'ppies. He didn't transfer me. Now when folks ask me how it was working at Woodlawn, I tell them that those aren't hippies, those are good people. Working at Woodlawn was the finest privilege in my career with the county.*[128]

A Woodlawn identity was recognizable immediately. Students walked around the school in bare feet and torn jeans, they did not go to class every day, and they, together with their teachers, were the governing body of the school. There were no bells, no hall passes, no tardy slips. There was not even a cafeteria. Woodlawn did not have a National Honor Society, there was no Woodlawn football team, and the students did not have a Junior/Senior Prom. There was no on-campus policy, and students were free to come and go as they pleased. There was no principal, and the head teacher who supervised the school wore sandals and blue-jeans and drove a Volkswagen 'Magic' Bus to school. The Woodlawn Program was not traditional, and in Arlington many referred to it as 'Hippie High.'

To a degree that stereotype was true. Woodlawn did oppose and reject conventional standards. Aside from Town Meeting there was no set structure at the school. "The teachers did not police the halls to make sure that students were in a classroom, and there were no unauthorized areas of the school to keep students out of. [The structure] found in traditional schools simply did not exist at Woodlawn."[129] There was no dress code or rule prohibiting male students to wear their hair long, and perhaps the most obvious reason

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[128]William "Billy" Holesberg, interview by Woodlawn Yearbook Staff, Arlington, Virginia, Spring 1978, page 5.

[129]Adelaide Rusch, (art teacher at Woodlawn), interviewer unknown, "Quotes for a Book," page 1.

Woodlawners were called hippies was because students looked like them. The art teacher, Ma Rusch, once had some of those male students pose for a picture as Christ and his disciples in the famous Last Supper. Indeed, "one thing you could say about the school, is that [it] put all of the barbers in town out of business."[130]

Student relationships with the home school did not change from the first year. The 1975-1976 Student Guide Book warned Woodlawn students who did visit their home schools "to act like one of the crowd - wear shoes, smoke in the smoking courts, and be 'courteous,' because home school administrators had the right to give Woodlawn students detention, deny them entry, or dream up any other punishment if the 'outsiders' broke their rules."[131] Therefore when students returned to their home schools for honor societies, sports teams, or chemistry class they behaved according to the traditional schools' rules. The "us" and "them" dichotomy never ceased to exist. Though some Woodlawn students were in advanced chemistry classes and on varsity track teams they were still labeled hippies because they were not mainstream kids.

Two thousand students attended the traditional high schools, but Woodlawn never had more than two hundred and forty. The small size of the school therefore fostered a friendly and informal atmosphere. Teachers were not antagonistic, they were approachable. In part this was because each served as an academic advisor, Woodlawn's adaptation of the guidance counselor, to approximately twenty students. Students chose their advisors and talked with them about "report cards, grades, the weather, SAT's [their] state of mind, or anything else that came up."[132] Advisor-advisee relationships were casual. They allowed teachers to get to know their students, and they allowed student to get "know not only the teacher, but the person behind the teacher

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[130]Ray Anderson, "Quotes for a Book," page 3.
[131]Student publication. Student Guide Book, Arlington, Virginia, 1975, page 2.
[132]Ibid.

as well."[133] The staff liked the students. They ate lunch with them, they had discussions with them, Ray Anderson even let students borrow his car. At the alternative students were not just another number. Classroom doors were always open and teachers had time "to deal with their students as persons, on a one-to-one basis." Though each student chose one teacher as his/her personal academic advisor, every teacher offered guidance to every student. If a student was having personal, family, or relationship problems in most cases he/she would talk with a teacher about what was troubling him/her. The Woodlawn staff provided a sympathetic ear, and "a number of students who went through traumas got genuine benefit from speaking with some of their teachers."[134] The small size of Woodlawn then, created an intimate environment which allowed students and teachers to get beyond formalities and forge actual friendships.

Hallways were not full of nameless faces and cold shoulders. At Woodlawn "everyone knew each other," and that made the school a friendlier place.[135] "At Yorktown if you asked somebody for a slug of their milk at lunch, they would crack your eyes out. But at Woodlawn, Joe Blow walks up to person X and says 'I'm thirsty,' and immediately he gets a frosty cold ten ounce coke in his face."[136] No one was better than anyone else at Woodlawn. If a trashcan fell over, "students helped [Billy] clean up. [Whereas] at other schools students would laugh at [the custodian] if [he] asked for help."[137] A sense of community pervaded the school building. Woodlawners could easily discern all visitors and new students. Despite efforts to remain an

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[133]Kevin Macelhorn - student, "Quotes for a Book," page 1.
[134]Kallen interview, 26 March 1996, page 2.
[135]Blair Reischer, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1996, page 4.
[136]Kevin Macelhone, (student), "Quotes for a Book," page 1.
[137]William "Billy" Holseberg, (Woodlawn Custodian), "Quotes for a Book," page 2.

"inconspicuous 'student,'" one reporter was "repeatedly asked: 'you're new here aren't you?'"[138] Similarly, if you were a participant in the Woodlawn Program and "you were walking down the hall after being absent a day several people would ask: 'where have ya been?'"[139] Students took an active interest in their school. They created it, they shaped it, and they managed it.

Town Meeting gave every member of Woodlawn an equal voice in running the program. Discussions centered on policy decisions, allocation of funds, and new ideas. If students wanted to change the grading system, they would take it to TM. If they wanted someone to come in and teach them basket weaving, TM would vote on the budget available to pay the craftsman. Or, if a teacher wanted a water-balloon-fight day (WB Day) , TM would decide if and when to have it. Not all issues were passed by Town Meeting, but all were discussed, and all decisions were made by both the staff and the students.[140] A teacher's opinion was valued no more than that of a student. A teacher's argument was listened to no more closely than a student's argument, and the head teacher's vote weighed no more heavily than that of the student sitting beside him. At Town Meeting students and teachers were equals. That sense of equality did not disappear once the meeting was adjourned. At Woodlawn, students and teachers were equals in all circumstances, all classrooms, and all contests.

Students were treated as adults and they lived up to what was expected of them. There were no discipline problems at Woodlawn. Students did not vandalize the bathrooms or write on school walls. When their janitor needed help in the hallway they helped him, and students worked with their teachers

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[138]Mark Osmun. "Experimental school under way." *Arlington News*, November 23, 1971.
[139]Ibid.
[140]Technically parents had a vote at TM as well, however, since Town Meeting met in the middle of the day when most parents were at work, they generally abstained.

to develop a relevant curriculum that met necessary requirements. "Rather than being told what it was they were going to study, students had a say in directing their education."[141] Sometimes students wanted specialized classes that Woodlawn teachers did not feel qualified to teach. To make those classes available, a portion of the budget was set aside for the purpose of hiring specialists. Students interested in a specific course would search out the prospective teacher and present the course and the teacher to the town meeting for approval and allocation of funds. Some courses included: anthropology taught by a professor from American University, Latin American history taught by a retired foreign service officer, inside broadcasting taught by a local radio station sales manager, and pottery taught by a professional potter.[142] Many students did volunteer work or had internships in the D.C. area for which they received credit in a related course. "An enormous number of students worked on independent study projects."[143] For example, a student would receive psychology credit for volunteering to work with the mentally retarded, or a student would work in a Mexican grocery store and earn Spanish credit.

Outsiders accused the Woodlawn community of having no academic standards. They called it the "druggie school, and claimed that the students were stupid."[144] "People were prone to make statements that students and teachers did no work and that they just sat around all day goofing off."[145] To the contrary, "what went on inside the classrooms was not all that different at Woodlawn than it was at the traditional schools."[146] Students at Woodlawn had

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[141]Adelaide Rusch, "Quotes for a Book," page 1.
[142]Blair Reischer. Student Guidebook, Arlington, Virginia, June 1975, page 10.
[143]Ellen Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia 23 February, 1996.
[144]Nancy Ensley - student, "Quotes for a Book," page 2.
[145]Kevin Macelhorn, "Quotes for a Book," page 1.
[146]Ellen Kurcis interview.

to meet all state requirements for graduation. They had to take all of the necessary English, math, and science courses just as everybody else. Students went to class, studied the material, had tests, and turned in papers just like other high school students. The difference at Woodlawn was that every class did not meet every day, students were allowed to work independently, and they were not punished for working creatively.

Interdisciplinary classes and electives kept classes new and exciting.[147] Instead of studying American literature for an entire school year, students and teachers worked together to develop English electives such as folklore or utopian communities. The teachers and students who were criticized as 'doing nothing all day long' felt that actually they were doing more work. "It was difficult" not only to "come up with new and creative elective courses" but also to keep up with the independent study projects.[148] The flexible schedule and innovative electives made the school "alternative" and it kept the school exciting, but it was also a lot of work.

Just because it was an alternative program did not mean Woodlawn was any easier than the traditional schools. Students worked hard, and they did so for two reasons. First, they had to perform equally well as the rest of the high school students in the county for the program to continue. Secondly, and more importantly, students at Woodlawn worked hard because they "were genuinely interested in learning for the sake of learning."[149] They were excited about the classes that they took, and they wanted to share what they learned with other students. Lillian Shorb never took a photography class, but she learned how to take pictures and develop film from students who did. Learning at Woodlawn worked in an unstructured way.

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[147]Interdisciplinary classes combine two or more subjects into one comprehensive course. An elective class is one that lasted for one quarter of the school year.
[148]Ellen Kurcis interview.
[149]Ibid.

The school did gradually adopt 'traditional' practices into its Program. In the Fall of the 1972-1973 school year Advanced Placement (AP) classes were offered for the first time. AP classes operated very traditionally. They required more classroom hours, teachers lectured, and because AP courses lasted the entire academic year, students in those classes could not take elective courses or do independent study. They chose a more regimented course, and consequently they chose more structure and less freedom in their education.

Tenth grade students were also added to Woodlawn during its second year of operation. The addition inevitably increased the structure of the program. Woodlawn remained small, and the addition was hardly detrimental, but more students meant more structure. Tenth grade students had more required courses, and the program had to meet their needs. Many of the first year students resented the changes made to their program. "They complained that the second year was nothing like the first."[150] During its first year Woodlawn was experimental precisely because it was the school's first year of operation. Old-timers wanted the program to "continue to be experimental. [They] wanted to try different things, prove they worked, and then move on to new things," whereas the newcomers who outnumbered the old-timers 4:1 had a different vision of Woodlawn.[151] "They had heard how great the school was and they wanted it to be the same -- an alternative."[152] Woodlawn catered to its students, and for many who had participated in the first year of the program the second year was a disappointment. However, those students were a minority, and the majority of the school did remain enthusiastic about the program.

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[150]Anderson interview, page 38.
[151]Blair Reischer interview, page 2.
[152]Ibid.

The addition of tenth grade students also brought Woodlawn's first appointed teacher to the program. Ray Anderson hired all of the first year teachers himself. He would not be entitled that authority after the program began. During the first year, town meeting voted that all new staff members be interviewed by a committee of students, teachers and parents, and not just the head teacher. It was a shrewd decision on the part of town meeting, one that would ensure a teaching staff that the Woodlawn community believed would live up to the ideals of the school. However, Arlington County did have rules of seniority from which Woodlawn staff was not exempt. If the school budget was cut, the teachers with the least experience in the county were fired so that senior staff would not lose their jobs. Similarly, if a school offered a new course and needed a new teacher, someone with seniority in the county would be appointed to the job before a school like Woodlawn would be allowed to interview applicants for the position.

The Woodlawn community did not resist county mandates, such as the addition of the tenth grade, or the staff seniority rule, but they did not let the county directives be a detriment to their program. Maryann Schwab was the physical education teacher assigned to Woodlawn in the Fall of 1972. She had seniority in the county, but she was not a good match for the school. Schwab was not comfortable with the informal atmosphere at Woodlawn, and she left the program halfway though the year. For months, tenth grade students had no physical education instruction. This was not a problem until the end of the school year when the county administration strongly suggested that "students spend a certain amount of time doing P.E."[153] In response, Anderson opened the Woodlawn building one weekend, and all of the tenth grade students went to school and played basketball and volleyball, cramming the entire year's worth of P.E. into a two day period. Similar physical education weekends were

[153]Anderson interview, page 45.

held other years, and some students even received credit for the course by walking to school.

The staff occasionally used unorthodox teaching methods at Woodlawn. Once a year they lured the juniors into taking state competency tests. Three weeks before the tests were given, teachers of history, government, and social studies worked to prepare the students for the exam. All eleventh grade students were told that if they did not know what the "Emancipation Proclamation was, or what a Yellow Dog contract was, or the Teller Amendment," that they had better come to the seminar review sessions. "Of course [teachers] would throw out some stuff that students had never heard of just to scare them a little," but it worked.[154] The students came, the teachers drilled them, and they always did fine on the tests. The test scores satisfied the school board, and Woodlawn was allowed to continue with its alternative teaching methods.

Over the years critics did complain about the school. Conservatives argued that its image reflected badly on the Arlington community, and that the school chased off good teachers like Maryann Schwab. "They shook their heads and disagreed," but they never did much more than that, and they did not have reason to.[155] There were no discipline problems at Woodlawn, the program appeared to be educating people, and the school was small enough that it did not threaten the traditional programs. There were no valid reason to close down the alternative.

Support within the county administration also kept critics at bay. Associate Superintendent Wilson, who was greatly respected throughout the community, supported alternative education in Arlington. He was "an advocate for all children," and he recognized that not all students performed

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[154]Anderson interview, page 48.
[155]Harold Wilson interview.

well or enjoyed the traditional school setting.[156] Wilson afforded Woodlawn the flexibility and protection it needed to establish itself as a legitimate alternative to traditional education in the county.

The participants in the Woodlawn Program were equally remarkable. They were the people who made the program work. Over the years "Ray Anderson did an amazing job."[157] County administrators afforded him flexibility, but only because Anderson proved himself capable of successfully juggling the roles of teacher and administrator. Harold Wilson "trusted Ray Anderson implicitly," and the administrator stated that Anderson "was primarily responsible for the success of the school."[158] The teachers at Woodlawn also deserve a tremendous amount of credit for making the program work. They brought life to learning in the relaxed atmospheres of their classrooms. Woodlawn's teachers were dedicated educators, and they worked hard to meet the changing needs of their students.

As is to be expected, the student body changed over the years. Politically active students stood out in the first few years, and then political activism gave way to art. In the mid-seventies, students at Woodlawn became very active in drama and then photography. They were the "artistic, non-conventional folks,"[159] and they wrote, directed, and starred in their own productions. Certainly the traditional schools produced future playwrights and actresses as well, but at Woodlawn creativity was unrestricted. One did not find plays with the title 'A Virgin to the Grave' at Wakefield, Washington-Lee, and Yorktown, and students at those schools did not publish uncensored books of their own photographs, or school annuals. At Woodlawn students were all very 'in tune' with their feelings and the feelings of others, as their various

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[156]Ibid.
[157]Ellen Kurcis interview.
[158]Wilson interview.
[159]Anderson interview, page 24.

projects reflect. As an independent study project for English, one student went to the county welfare office and researched the amount of food money allotted to someone on welfare. For three months she only ate what she could buy with food stamps. She "read books on the subject and kept a diary of how it felt to live that way."[160] The students did not abuse the liberties given them at Woodlawn. Instead, they used their time constructively, which proved yet another strength of the program.

At the high school level the program prospered in the seventies. Not only did Woodlawners match their mainstream peers, but after the first few years they surpassed them academically. One indicator of the academic achievement is the average SAT scores at each school.

| | Woodlawn | | Arlington | | National | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Verbal | Math | Verbal | Math | Verbal | Math |
| 1975-76 | 524 | 496 | 473 | 513 | 431 | 472 |
| 1976-77 | 515 | 505 | 462 | 504 | 429 | 470 |
| 1977-78 | 520 | 483 | 471 | 505 | 429 | 468 |

These results show the high level of academic achievement of Woodlawn students.[161] In 1974 the school boasted that over sixty percent of Woodlawn students went on to college, and that same year, "five of Arlington's 16 National Merit semifinalists were from the Woodlawn senior class."[162] The percentage of Woodlawn graduates to go on to college always matched that of the traditional schools. In fact, the alternative was often a haven for the county's brightest students.

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[160]Ibid.

[161]Nancy Houghtaling. Report on Alternative Schools, Arlington, Virginia, June 15, 1979, page 20.

[162]Natalie Ganley. "An Experiment in Learning." *The Arlington Journal,* Arlington, Virginia, 14 February 1974.

Students at Woodlawn fit into one of four groups. First, there were the very bright students. Anderson called them the "bright but bored."[163] Some, like Martha Bozman, had been in the county's 'gifted' seminar program from fifth grade up through high school. When she arrived at Yorktown, she "was bored with the slow pace" at which many of her classes were moving.[164] The idea of choice and self-directed learning at Woodlawn appealed to her, and that is why she came.

The second group of students were those who preferred a smaller school setting. At Woodlawn, students were individuals, not names. "Lots of them just wanted a quiet place to get away from the giganticism of the large traditional schools."[165] The alternative offered an education that was personalized and not cold and impersonal like the traditional high schools. Woodlawn's small size also enabled it to be flexible, which allowed students to exercise control over their education.

The third group of students at Woodlawn "were the non-achievers."[166] These were the kids that the traditional schools labeled as 'troublemakers.' They were not interested in learning, and for them going to Woodlawn was the easiest way to get through school. "They would go to class for a few hours and then go work for the rest of the day."[167] A large percentage of these students would have posed a threat to the program, but they never constituted more than a small minority at Woodlawn.

The last group of students were those whose parents and teachers did not expect to come. "They were the B students, lost in the big schools. They

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[163]Anderson interview, page 38.
[164]Martha Bozman, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1996.
[165]Blair Reischer interview.
[166]Ray Anderson quoted in Natalie Ganely's article "An Experiment in Learning." *The Arlington Journal*, February 14, 1974.
[167]Ibid.

never caused any trouble, but they were often too shy to get to know teachers or other students."[168] Students like Lillian Shorb "hated the big school atmosphere. At Wakefield, there were too many cliques, and if you weren't athletic or really smart it was hard to fit in."[169] To some, Woodlawn was an ideal alternative.

Many people thought that the school would close down after two or three years of operation. They thought that after the politically active original students graduated, there would not be a voice to demand an alternative program in Arlington. The critics, however, were wrong. Woodlawn never suffered from a lack of student interest, and after three years it became apparent to Ray Anderson that Woodlawn would continue. The revelation developed as a student told him a story: when she went to her guidance counselor to get permission to go to Woodlawn, the teacher asked "Why? You are such a good student, why would you want to go there?" The girl did not tell her guidance counselor why, but she did tell Ray Anderson. She said that she was quiet. In the traditional schools she had attended, she sat in the back of the class and did not raise her hand a lot, and so the teachers did not call on her. Half the time she felt that they did not even know her name. The student did not like school that way. She wanted to be part of a group. She wanted to be involved.[170] At Woodlawn she was both, and as long as there were students who preferred the flexible, student-centered, individualized alternative, there would be a demand for Woodlawn. The Program was more than just a school. It was a community committed to equal relationships in life and in learning.

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[168]Ibid.

[169]Lillian Shorb, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 9 March 1996.

[170]Anderson interview, page 27-28.

# Chapter Five
# A Different Alternative:
# The Hoffman-Boston Program

Community efforts to reform Arlington's Public School System did not stop when the proposals for the Woodlawn and Drew Programs were accepted in the Spring of 1971. For the first time ever, traditional education in the county was publicly criticized for its strict rules, regimented curriculum and institutional environment. The neglect of the county and school boards to integrate Drew Elementary was made public. The issue of relevancy in the classrooms, first raised by proponents of the New School, was now questioned by a broader base within the Arlington community.

Independent of the school board, parents conducted a survey of the curriculum in the junior high schools in the Fall of 1971. For months they studied all six of Arlington's junior high schools and finally submitted a report to the school board on March 16, 1972. The Progress Report on Curriculum in Junior High Schools argued that junior high schools were not well suited to the needs of their students. "The schools were incredibly strict. They were very rigid, joyless, dour kinds of places. Kids felt trapped."[171] They resented hall passes, lavatory passes, and attendance taken in each class every day. Many students simply did not enjoy the schools which regimented their academic needs and "did nothing to meet [their] emotional needs."[172] Parents wanted to make the junior high school experience a positive place, and given the existence of alternatives at the high school and elementary levels, the group proposed an alternative junior high school as well.

In an informal setting Woodlawn encouraged responsibility, self-motivation, and self-discipline in its students. Drew created a warm and caring place where children were valued for their individuality, and both programs fostered fun and excitement in the learning process. At the junior high

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[171]Michael Versace, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2 April 1996.
[172]Ibid.

school level, parents, students and teachers sought to combine aspects of the two existing alternatives and create another new school.

The school board received letters from parents, students, teachers and community members supporting the proposal.[173] In some cases these were people with children or siblings at either Woodlawn or Drew. Michael Versace, who ran a teen center in the county, was dedicated to helping students. He worked with students at Woodlawn, he was aware of the "prison-like" atmosphere at junior high schools in the county, and advocated the establishment of an alternative at that level.[174] Many parents were dissatisfied with the structure of the traditional junior high schools. One parent found the learning viewpoint at Williamsburg Junior High too narrow. "Examinations in history consisted not of analyzing what were the major historical events of an era and what influenced them, but instead of memorizing such details as what name Pocohontas took when she married John Rolfe. The teacher dished out something and wanted it dished back the same way she had dished it out."[175] Focusing on what they termed "unsuited" curriculum in the junior high schools, students and parents pressured the school board for another relevant educational setting in the county.

In the wake of the dramatic New School movement and the equally intense first years of operation at both Woodlawn and Drew, the proposal for the model junior high school lacked controversy. It was not ground-breaking and conservatives did not oppose the concept . The establishment of Woodlawn removed the "trouble-makers" from the traditional schools, and the same result could be expected at the junior high level. The school board, still dominated by liberals, could not deny the demand for an alternative at the

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[173]Minute Book No. 10, County School Board, Arlington, Virginia, March 16 and March 23 1972, pages 415 & 419.
[174]Michael Versace interview.
[175]Bart Barnes. "Turned-Off Students Get Alternative - In The System." *The Washington Post*, June 1, 1975, page F1.

junior high level, and it "readily approved" the new proposal.[176] Budgetary implications were the only roadblock. Final action had to be given to the County Board which accepted the proposal on May 6, 1972, at which point the model junior high school became a reality.

The ease with which this new proposal sailed through the school board is a result of county politics at the time. Though the backlash against liberalism was in full cry on the national level, reactionary conservatism had not yet trickled down to the local level in Arlington. In the early-mid seventies progressives maintained a majority on both the county and school boards. Until the end of the decade, they provided a block of support for the alternative programs which allowed Drew, Hoffman-Boston (the model junior high school), and Woodlawn to establish themselves without conservatives challenging them every step of the way. Furthermore, the existing "alternative programs required no preparation from the school system," they helped to alleviate student unrest, particularly at the high school level, and they were a source of favorable publicity for the county. The same results were expected of a model junior high school.[177]

After it was accepted, the model junior high school was assigned to the Hoffman-Boston building. Hoffman-Boston had been an all-black school in the days of segregation. When the integrated Thomas Jefferson Junior High School (T.J.) population grew so large that the school could not accommodate all students, the seventh grade was moved to the Hoffman-Boston Building, which was then renamed the Thomas Jefferson Annex. A new Thomas Jefferson Junior High School opened in the Fall of 1972, and when the seventh graders left the Annex, the new model junior high school occupied the

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[176]Don Brandewie; Memorandum concerning a proposal which would combine 10th grade Woodlawn students with Hoffman-Boston Program, Arlington, Virginia, Spring 1972, page 1.
[177]Michael Versace interview.

building. "The first thing the Program did was revert back to the school's old name, Hoffman-Boston."[178]

Immediately following the May 6 announcement parents and students organized into various committees to help facilitate the planning of the program. The initiative was an attempt to ensure the sort of school these groups wanted. 'The Student's [sic] Committee on The Hoffman-Boston Program' submitted a five page report to the school board. Students wanted freedom of movement, attendance, and scheduling. "With parents' permission," students argued that they "be allowed to leave school grounds during optional activities or unscheduled time."[179] They believed that "attendance at classes should be optional for all students performing satisfactorily (passing) in that course," and they wanted "scheduling to be as flexible as possible, with no course scheduled more than three times per week."[180] Students also made policy-making, course credit, evaluation, and curriculum recommendations. Though they may not have been as high-powered or well spoken as their high school peers, these students had concerns, and they had their own ideas about how their school should operate.

Parents wanted learning to be a positive experience. They wanted their children to be encouraged to take responsibility for their education, and they wanted their personal as well as academic needs to be met. To that end, the 'Committee on Teacher-Principal Selection for the Model Junior High School' published a report which was given to the school board to help the selection process. Given the age of the students involved, parents agreed that a principal rather than a 'head teacher' would best suit new program. In the "final analysis" the committee believed that the "climate of the model junior

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[178]Mike Lipske. "Alternative Junior High Offers 'An Indi- -ualistic Approach.'" *Northern Virginia Sun.*, March 23, 1974.
[179]Recommendations of the Student's Committee on The Hoffman-Boston Program, Student's Committee, Arlington, Virginia, May 28, 1971, page 5.
[180]Ibid., page 1.

high would be determined by the caliber of the principal selected."[181] It therefore suggested that widespread publicity be given to the position of principal, and that the job be filled before the end of the school year to allow the appointee to observe applicants for the teaching positions in a teaching situation.

The board disregarded most of Committees' suggestions. It already had a candidate in mind. Don Brandewie was the current Assistant Director of the Arlington Adult Education Program, he had served as a classroom teacher at Swanson Junior High School, and he was the Secondary Intern in Administration during the 1970-1971 school year. As an intern, Brandewie worked with principals and administrators throughout the county. He also spent half of that year working with Dr. Lloyd Trump in the office of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). At NASSP Brandewie learned what principals around the country were doing, which in theory, would help him better serve the Arlington community. His work with Lloyd Trump, who was at the forefront of alternative education at the time, also exposed Brandewie to the operations involved in that type of learning. Once the proposal for a model junior high school was accepted, Brandewie seemed the perfect man for the job. He had an administrator's perspective on alternative education, "he had a good reputation with the County Education Center, and he worked well with the county administration."[182] On May 18, 1972, Brandewie was hired for the position of principal at Hoffman-Boston. He was a "terrific choice to start the program," and he served the school well during its first and most vulnerable year.[183]

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[181]Report of the Committee on Teacher-Principal Selection for the Model Junior High School, Arlington County Virginia, Spring 1973, page 1.
[182]Randy McKnight, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 23 February 1996.
[183]Ibid.

In each of Arlington's elementary and junior high schools teachers and guidance counselors informed students and their parents about the new alternative. Hoffman-Boston was described as "a program with varied strategies and environments for learning through which all pupils, regardless of differences in individual talents and interests, would proceed with gains."[184] Curricula materials were to be individualized and organized to provide self-direction, self-pacing, and self-evaluation by the pupils themselves. Similar to the admission procedure at Woodlawn, any student who was interested in the Hoffman-Boston Program filled out both a parental permission form and teacher discussion form and all applications were held in anticipation of a lottery. Enrollment opportunities for each junior high school were as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gunston | - 40 (10-7th, 15-8th, 15-9th) | Stratford | - 50 (14-7th, 18-8th, 18-9th) |
| T.J. | - 50 (14-7th, 18-8th, 18-9th) | Swanson | - 40 (10-7th, 15-8th, 15-9th) |
| Kenmore | - 60 (16-7th, 22-8th, 22-9th) | Williamsburg | - 60 (16-7th, 22-8th, 22-9th) |

A lottery would determine admission should the number of applications from any one school exceed the number of spaces available. For the three hundred available spaces only one hundred and eighty student applications were received, and all applicants were admitted to the program.[185]

Like Ray Anderson at Woodlawn, Don Brandewie hired all of the teachers at Hoffman-Boston himself. Announcements concerning teaching positions were posted throughout the county after the proposal for the program was accepted. All teacher who were interested in transferring to the new school made their wishes known, and by July 1, 1972, six full-time and seven part-time teachers were hired to complete the Hoffman-Boston staff.

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[184]H.L. ' ack, Director of Secondary Programs. Letter to Parents, Arlington, Virginia, May 24, 1972.

[185]Similar to the Woodlawn Program, very few minority students ever attended Hoffman-Boston.

Most came from inside the county. Brandewie had known English teacher Randy McKnight at Swanson, and he knew French teacher Mary Flynn by her reputation in the county. The principal sought energy and creativity in the teaching staff, and like Anderson, Brandewie wanted teachers at his school who wanted to be there.

The teachers were "thrilled to have the opportunity to break away from the traditional structure and start something new."[186] Most believed that junior high school students needed a less structured and more individualized learning environment than the county was providing. Randy McKnight believed that the traditional junior high schools "were too lecture-centered and too linear. They were unsuited for students who needed to get up and move around and be doing things other than sitting at a desk, listening to a teacher, and doing worksheets."[187] The staff looked forward to creating a more personalized atmosphere at Hoffman-Boston, and they began to plan ways in which to do it.

Throughout the summer students, parents, and teachers met informally to discuss goals and give direction to the program. The existing alternatives did give the group some ideas. Hoffman-Boston would adopt a first-name policy and flexible schedule as used at Woodlawn. Drew's personalized school setting, where feelings, values and emotional and social needs were given as much attention as academic pursuits was also adapted to the model junior high school. Developing a curriculum proved more challenging. Students did not want lecture-style classes. Instead, they preferred educational methods such "learning games, field trips, independent study, participatory seminars, and small group work."[188] They wanted to design their own independent study

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[186]Judy Mayeux, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996.

[187]McKnight interview.

[188]Student Committee, Recommendations of the Student's Committee on The Hoffman-Boston Program, page 3.

projects, they wanted outside teachers, and they wanted choices. To meet the curricular needs of students, parents, and the county, Don Brandewie introduced what he had learned while working with Dr. Lloyd Trump.

The Trump System of Alternative Education stressed the "individualization of education to all students."[189] In theory, it sounded great. Students would work one-on-one with teachers all day long, they would receive a totally personalized education, and each year the program would adapt to the changing student body. Hoffman-Boston would emphasized individual differences among students in their talents, interes , and goals. Decisions about study would be made individually by each stu at with a teacher-advisor (TA), and the teacher in charge of the subject area. State and county requirements for junior high school students would be used as guidelines, but the people of the program would take precedence over the structure. The students and teachers would create the structure of the Hoffman-Boston Program as they went along.

The informal meetings did provide a forum to introduce new ideas, but there was "no time to discuss the practicality nor the reality of them."[190] Brandewie requested planning for the staff several times throughout the summer, but the school board was unresponsive. The Woodlawn and Drew Programs were organized over the summer without county funded planning, and the board did not anticipate such a request from Hoffman-Boston.

Until this issue was raised, most of the preliminary preparation for the model junior high school was lifted from Woodlawn. Applications for admission were filled out, a lottery was prepared, and students, parents, and teachers formed committees to discuss the operation of the program. A crucial difference, however, was the personalities involved. The Woodlawn Program

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[189]Lloyd Trump. Xerox report on "Individualized Instruction" used by teachers at Hoffman-Boston in 1972.
[190]Don Brandewie; Memorandum to Dr. Mack, Spring 1973, page 1.

was created by a high powered group who had worked for years to change the traditional school system. Students led the new school movement, and they were incremental in developing the academic program that made it work. At Hoffman-Boston, students were five years younger than their high school peers. They had no idea how to run a school, and this left the parents and staff to organize the program. Though these two groups had good intentions, they were not fueled with the energy that came from years of battle with Arlington County Administration. They had no clear idea of how to run an alternative school, and they probably did not realize the extent to which the Woodlawn community worked to prepare the program for the first day of school. With regard to planning, perhaps the Hoffman-Boston staff expected too much from a school board that did not recognize the different needs of the new alternative program.

The school board did finally respond to Brandewie's request for a staff meeting in late August when a budget was approved for a five day planning workshop. However, when the staff arrived at Hoffman-Boston for the first time they faced a more imminent problem than developing the program's curriculum. "The building was a mess."[191] The school had no books, no supplies, and the desks and chairs were scattered throughout the building. The seventh graders of the Thomas Jefferson Annex left at the end of June, and all summer the county neglected to replenish the building. The week was spent setting up classrooms for the opening of school, not developing an alternative curricula. "Time so desperately needed to plan the Hoffman-Boston Program was lost,"[192] and the few Trump elements that the staff had vaguely discussed were the only tenets that the teachers had to cling to on opening day.

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[191]Mayeux interview.

[192]Don Brandewie; Memorandum to Dr. Mack, Spring 1973, page 1.

The staff had "no clue what to expect" when the school opened on September 9, 1972. On the very first day the entire school, 165 students, Brandewie, and the teaching staff met in the gym for a group activity. "One teacher went to the gym with a long rope in hand. When everyone had arrived, the teacher introduced himself to a student and asked that student who he was. Following the introduction the student held onto the rope and went to find another student. The two introduced themselves and then the first student introduced the second student to the teacher, and the process continued. Slowly everybody was picked up on the rope until finally the whole school was connected. Then everyone made a big circle. The lesson learned was that, although the group was diverse and separate everyone, was part of one thing."[193] It was a symbolic start to the program.

The teachers at Hoffman-Boston had their work cut out for them. From the very beginning, they were to play a pivotal role in curricula and organizational structures at the school. In addition to his/her teaching duties, each full-time staff member was an advisor to a group of twenty-five students. The TA's classroom served as a base for that teacher's group of students, and the teacher-advisor (TA) went beyond the role of the home room teacher of the traditional schools, to befriend each student as well as guide him/her academically. In addition to organizing the alternative program, the teachers found themselves working as counselors for their students.

The traditional junior high schools used the alternative as a dumping ground. Teachers and guidance counselors at the traditional schools encouraged their 'problem kids' to attend Hoffman-Boston. As a result, the school was loaded with kids who had problems, particularly the first year. Don Brandewie's statistical research from a mid-year study recorded close to 70% of the students as having problems:

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[193]McKnight interview.

- 10% of the student had a record of disruptive behavior
- 6% of the students had severe attendance problems
- 19% of the students were emotionally disturbed
- 1% were children with severe learning disabilities
- 33% had been or were involved in drugs

The categories were exclusive. That is, even if a child had several severe problems he or she was only counted once in the determination of the percentages listed. This accounted for the low percentages of learning disabilities since in many cases the learning disability was of such long standing that other problems assumed a primary level of severity. These figures are startling, unfortunate and unfair.[194] Certainly no other school in the county recorded over half of its student population as having problems.

One might have expected Woodlawn to have been in a similar situation, but this was not the case. At Woodlawn students themselves created the program, and they wanted to make it work. These students sought control over their education and they went to the alternative to get it. They were older, more mature, and better able to take responsibility for themselves than the students at the middle school were. At Hoffman-Boston most students were not interested in alternatives to the traditional system of education, they did not help their teachers develop new courses, and they did not care if the program lasted beyond that first year.

Therefore, the Hoffman-Boston staff was attempting to provide greater self-discipline and self-responsibility to a majority of students who were not capable of such things. Some students were able, and these were generally those who were there because their parents wanted them in an alternative program, but "they were really the minority."[195] Teachers had a double workload. Not only did they have to organize a curriculum and plan the entire

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[194]Don Brandewie; Memorandum to Dr. Harold Wilson concerning: Statistical Information of Hoffman-Boston Students, Spring 1973, page 2.
[195]Mayeux interview.

Hoffman-Boston Program, but they had to work with students who challenged their efforts every step of the way. The reality of Hoffman-Boston was not living up to the ideal of the model junior high school.

The first semester was particularly trying. There were no required courses for the first six weeks, during which time classes operated with virtually no structure at all. Because the teachers had no planning the program bordered on total lack of control. Randy McKnight and Chelly Glassman managed to keep students in their classroom part of the day by having the students make films in the school's Language Arts class. "Kids were divided into groups, all given the same plot, and then allowed to work independently from there. During their group time they would work on their movie, and then the rest of the day they could pretty much do whatever they wanted."[196] For young students who had never experienced this lack of structure the freedom at Hoffman-Boston was too much, and the teachers met frequently to discuss ways of better organizing the school.

The program sought to create an environment where kids would be excited about learning. But the first few weeks proved that good intentions were not enough. The school needed planning and some kind of structure if it was going to survive. The Trump system provided a model of education in theory that was realistically impossible to achieve at Hoffman-Boston. In response to the "chaos" teachers stayed late after school for meetings often two and three times a week until 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to solve the problem of how to make Hoffman-Boston work.[197] From the very beginning the staff was in a constant state of evaluating itself as well as the educational program they were trying to create.

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[196]McKnight interview.

[197]Mary Flynn, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 13 February 1996.

After six weeks, the staff adopted a module schedule that was designed to give more structure to the program. Students did not have a particular class every day or at the same time each day of the week as they had at their home schools. Instead, the Hoffman-Boston schedule consisted of thirteen modules, each twenty-five minutes long, with a five minute break in between. The 1972-1973 Master Schedule illustrates how the 'mod' schedule worked:

TEACHER-PROGRAM MASTER SCHEDULE
HOFFMAN-BOSTON 1972-73

| Area | | | Lang. Arts | | Soc. St. | For. Language | | Fine Arts | | Practical Arts | | | Health- |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course | | | | | | Sp. | Fr. | Music | Art | | | | |
| Teacher | | | Glassman | | Williams | Ryerna | Flynn | Kennedy | Rachlerbaumer | | | | |
| Time M | Daily Meeting with Teacher-Advisor | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thr | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8:45 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thr | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9:10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9:15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9:40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | T.A. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | T.A. | | | | | | | | |
| | | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | | | Lunch | | | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| | Lunch | Lunch | | | | | Lunch | | | Lunch | | | |
| | | | T.A. | | | | | | | | | T.A. | |
| | | T.A. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 45 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 15 | | | | T.A. | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 45 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Teachers were in their classrooms for the shaded modules each day, and "students came in whenever they felt like it to work on various projects with their teachers."[198]

[198]Ibid.

Teachers developed syllabi for their classes. Some of the instruction was interdisciplinary and conducted in team teaching situations, but for the most part everything that first year was totally individualized. The teacher did not lecture; instead, each instructor met individually with each student. Students developed contracts with clearly defined goals, either on their own or with a teacher. The pair would then meet when the contract was complete, and together they would grade the student's work. There were no classes as such. Instead students would simply come in at the designated time and work independently while they waited to meet with their teacher. Mary Flynn had packets of French materials for her students and each student worked at his/her own pace. "Students would come in and take a Baskin-Robbins number off the wall and wait their turn to meet with [her]. Mary would call them up to her couch one at a time, chart the student's progress, and then two would agree on the next set of assignments."[199] Similar approaches were used throughout the school.

At Thanksgiving time the county budget provided for another staff position at Hoffman-Boston. Jim Schroeder was hired as a part-time math teacher and part-time aide to the principal. He had had four and a half years teaching experience and after briefly selling disability insurance, decided to return to the classroom. He arrived at Hoffman-Boston for an interview with Don Brandewie and found "kids flying all over the place."[200] After a tour of the school and an explanation of the Program, Schroeder joined the Hoffman-Boston staff on the spot. Brandewie did not consult one teacher before hiring the new staff member, and though Schroeder fit in well at the school, teachers did not approve of their principal hiring someone without consulting them first. The teachers worked hard to develop a successful program that would

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[199]Ibid.

[200]Jim Schroeder, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia 23 February 1996.

work at Hoffman-Boston, and they wanted to have a say in the decision-making policies that governed their school, including staff changes. From that moment on teachers organized interview committees and did participate in the hiring of new staff members.

Things were beginning to fall into place and it was the staff, more than Brandewie, that was making things happen. Brandewie recognized that the teachers needed freedom to develop a successful program. He took care of the County Administration and let the school take care of itself. The teachers were risk-takers. The majority of them were young, most in their mid-twenties, and they were idealistic and dedicated to the idea of an alternative educational program. The staff, perhaps more than anyone else, wanted the school work to work. They devoted countless hours to the organization of the program, and many more to the counseling of its students. Though none of teachers could accurately gauge the amount of learning that went on at Hoffman-Boston the first year, the staff was confident that improvements in the program were made.

The first year at Hoffman-Boston was one of trial and error. "It was an emotional roller-coaster for everyone - students, parents, and staff."[201] As a result, strong ties were formed between students and teachers and within the staff itself. "There was a real sense of caring" at the school, which perhaps became the primary strength of the Program.[202] Many students who had previously loathed school "felt comfortable at Hoffman-Boston, and many parents were subsequently thrilled with the school. For some it was the first time their son or daughter actually liked going to school."[203] Critics of the junior high school concept in the early seventies argued that the "schools did not encourage exploration enough. In fact, they labeled junior highs as

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[201]Don Brandewie; Memorandum to Dr. Mack, Spring 1973, page 3.
[202]Flynn interview.
[203]Mayeux interview.

failures for not fulfilling that function."[204] Though unorthodox, the learning environment at Hoffman-Boston did encourage exploration, and as far as meeting students individual emotional needs, the program was a success.

After an unorganized, unstable, and "unbelievable first year," it is perhaps amazing that the Hoffman-Boston Program was allowed to continue.[205] However, the school did alleviate problems in the traditional junior high schools which pleased its critics. It did not harm any students in any way, and its "relaxed atmosphere and individualized program helped many troubled students get through a difficult phase of their adolescent lives."[206] The Woodlawn and Drew Programs continued to produce positive results, and so the school board could afford to maintain the alternative junior high school despite its inability to gauge students' academic progress. With a year of experience, and continued planning over the summer months, it was believed that the Hoffman-Boston Program could only get better.

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[204]Don Brandewie, Memorandum to Dr. Mack, Spring 1973, page 2.
[205]Schroeder interview.
[206]Don Brandewie; Memorandum to Dr. Mack, Spring 1973, page 2.

# Chapter Six
# Hoffman-Boston: The Middle Years

THE HOFFMAN-BOSTON COROLLARY

*Who is the pupil?*
*A Child of God, not a tool of the state.*
*Who is the teacher?*
*A Guide, not a guard.*
*Who is the faculty?*
*A community of scholars, not a union of mechanics.*
*Who is the principal?*
*A master of teaching, not a master of teachers.*
*What is learning?*
*A journey, not a destination.*
*What is discovery?*
*Questioning the answers, not answering the questions.*
*What is the process?*
*Discovering ideas, not covering content.*
*What is the goal?*
*Open minds, not closed issues.*
*What is the test?*
*Being and becoming, not remembering and reviewing.*
*What is the school?*
*Whatever we choose to make it.*[207]

If Woodlawn was considered 'Hippie High,' then Hoffman-Boston was definitely 'Hippie Junior High.' Again, there was no dress code or rule prohibiting male students from having long hair, and students were allowed free time during the course of each school day. Teachers did not lecture to note-taking students and students were not shuttled from class to class each hour when a bell rang. Attendance was checked once at the end of each quarter, there were couches in the classrooms, and students played their guitars in the hallway. Given the alternative's free-form structure it was difficult for outsiders, and sometimes even insiders, to recognize that there was a structure. To many the school seemed out of control, and the fact that it was quickly labeled "the weird school, the druggie school, and Hippie Junior High," was therefore not all that surprising.[208]

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[207]Allan A. Glatthorn. "A New Catechism." *Hoffman-Boston Program Yearbook.* Spring 1975, page 20.
[208]Mary Flynn, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 13 February 1996.

Students at Hoffman-Boston did not do 'normal' junior high school things like sit at desks all day, study out of textbooks, and play on sports teams in the afternoons. Many of the students went to class no more than four hours a day; they studied at math labs and learning centers, and their afterschoool activities tended to stretch their imaginations rather than their quads or hamstrings. However, the school was not a haven for drug-users and near drop-outs as many people claimed. Hoffman-Boston offered students a choice in how and what they studied in a relaxed and personalized atmosphere.

At Hoffman-Boston students had a voice in planning their education. As long as they met all course requirements, students were free to take as many or as few modules as they wanted. The 'mod' schedule from the first year remained the same in succeeding years: 12 modules, each 25 minutes long, with a five minute break in between. Most classes had a "minimum attendance requirement of 6-8 mods a week for credit," but each class had a different system for dividing up class time.[209] For example, it was recommended that students schedule "single modules rather than 2 or more consecutive mods" for typing. In science, however, students were required to schedule "at least 2 consecutive mods," with no limit on the number each day.[210] The program was individualized and self-pacing. Students chose the courses they studied and teachers catered to student interest. Self-pacing allowed the student who excelled in first-year French to continue onto the next level during the same academic year. Similarly, it allowed the student who had problems with geometry the choice "not to finish in June and to pick up where he left off the following September."[211] Students chose the pace at which they studied as well as the courses they scheduled each day.

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[209]Hoffman-Boston Staff, Module Requirement for Courses, September 1973, page 1.
[210]Ibid., page 1-2.
[211]Hoffman-Boston Staff, letter to the Arlington County Administration and School Board Members, May 30, 1974.

The amount of freedom students had at the alternative school was significantly different from the other junior highs around the county. Students who wanted to change their schedules daily were allowed to do so, and those who preferred regularity in their day could have that too. At the traditional junior highs, students' schedules were planned for them, but at Hoffman-Boston, "about half of the student's day was set aside for flexible scheduling."[212] Students spent approximately half of their time in county required courses, but their school experience was spent learning what the student considered to be the better alternative. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their education. "A child might decide to spend 75 minutes in the science center working on an experiment -- to really work on it and get it done. Then in the afternoon he might spend some time exercising in the gym."[213] There were no limits and there were very few rules, and the endless possibilities to create and to invent educational projects produced a "tremendous amount of energy at the school."[214]

An organized activity period, planned by both the student and the staff, was scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. "The theory was that if teachers offered something interesting students would come."[215] The activities, or 'happenings' as they were called, took place during regular school hours, and sometimes they were even held on the weekends. Many students decided to join Bobbi Schildt's history class in the teepee that she and one of the other teachers used in their study of Native Americans. Students joined Susan Welsh's science class when the group tried to bake cookies outside using solar ovens. A 'World Food Day' also drew a large crowd of students, teachers, and Hoffman-Boston parents, and one Sunday afternoon "Mary

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[212]Mike Lipske. *Northern Virginia Sun.* "Alternative Junior High Offers 'An Individualistic Approach,'" March 23, 1974.
[213]Ibid.
[214]Randy McKnight, interview by Christy Mach, 23 February 1996.
[215]Bobbi Schildt, interview by Christy Mach, 20 February 1996.

Flynn organized a bicycle tour of Arlington called tour d'Arlington, patterned after the 2,300 mile tour de France bicycle race."[216]

Students and teachers maintained a level of energy in the classrooms at Hoffman-Boston. The science department directed by Steve Horowitz and Susan Welch, led students in their "quest for scientific knowledge" by offering many "diversified activities including mini-courses such as 'the great outdoors,' 'anatomy and physiology,' 'Man, Myth, and Magic,' 'Kitchen Chemistry,' and 'movement.'"[217] During their quest the class encountered "stopped up sinks, explosions, fires, loose gerbils, eclipses, flight workshops, plaster casting, plant growing and other generally chaotic activities."[218] Language arts activities ranged from "a Georgetown scavenger hunt to grammar activities with a world of choices in between. From the 'create' box to the 'making it strange' corner, students learned to explore their creativity and build language skills, while enjoying themselves."[219] The drama class often played acting pranks on the rest of the school to test their performance abilities in what were classed 'living stage workshops.' "One student pretended that there was a mouse behind a broom in the library, another went to the science lab and pretended to get acid in his eyes, and another group of students staged a fight in front of the school office. Staff members responded to each of the 'workshops,' and the students walked away pleased with their performances."[220] School certainly was not boring at Hoffman-Boston.

One of the more memorable episodes at the school involved a six week mini-course on Brautigan's book *Trout Fishing in America*. The culminating activity in the book involved a scavenger hunt, which Chelle Glassman's

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[216]Bart Barnes. "Turned-Off Students Get An Alternative - In The System." *The Washington Post*, June 27, 1974, page F1.
[217]Yearbook Staff. *Hoffman-Boston Program Yearbook*. Spring 1975, page 10.
[218]Ibid.
[219]Ibid., page 18.
[220]Mayeux interview.

language arts class decided to organize as an event for the entire school. "Chelly's class organized the whole school - 180 kids - into evenly grouped teams that were each given a list of things to be found in various places throughout the school."[221] Just as Don Brandewie walked into the building with the Home Economics Supervisor from the State, the entire school burst out of the cafeteria doors in every possible direction in search of the treasures on their lists. "Don's jaw dropped, the Home Economics Supervisor from the State was shocked, and that was pretty par for the course."[222]

Students who were encouraged to take an active role in their education, also contributed to innovative courses at Hoffman-Boston. One such student-initiated class studied Death as an interdisciplinary mix of English and history. The class read William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily* and Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death*, and complemented the readings with visits to a nearby funeral home and local cemetery. The group "explored feelings, customs, and traditions associated with death."[223] At the end of the course, a student suggested that everyone write their own obituaries, and the group had a discussion of how they felt about death and what they had learned from the class. At Hoffman-Boston, learning was not limited to textbook study in a classroom setting; students also learned from sharing and analyzing their opinions and feelings too.

Many students who had special needs prospered under the individualized attention their teachers provided them. During its first year of operation, Hoffman-Boston was a dumping ground for 'problem kids' throughout the county. Though that percentage of students did fall over the years, the alternative continued to be sent kids who had problems. "For those

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[221]Ibid.
[222]Flynn interview.
[223]Bart Barnes. "Turned-Off Students Get Alternative - In the System." *The Washington Post*, June 1, 1975, page F1.

students who had been turned off to learning, Hoffman-Bo n was a step in the right direction."[224] Jim Schroeder remembers "one st nt named Richard. He was a very angry kid and teachers had all sorts of meetings to try and figure out what to do with him. Richard had an immediate reaction and distrust of authority, and so the staff decided never to respond to him in an authoritative way. [They] decided to be positive with Richard whenever he misbehaved, and it actually worked."[225] The student was no longer hostile towards his teachers and his behavior at school did improve. The teachers took a genuine interest in their students, and that was perhaps the program's greatest strength.

Teachers worked to create a comfortable and educational atmosphere at Hoffman-Boston, concentrating on their students' emotional as well as academic needs. Teacher-Advisor groups (TAs), Hoffman-Boston's adaptation of a home room, provided a base of support for students who met with their TAs at the beginning of each school day. Each teacher-advisor helped students plan their schedules, charted student progress, and served as a resource scholastically as well as personally.

Students and teachers had unique relationships at the alternative. It was not unusual for students to hug their teachers before they left school at the end of the day. "Foot massages were occasionally exchanged" between students and staff, and teachers took students on "annual ice-cutting ventures up to Vermont for the weekend."[226] Students convinced librarian Judy Lucia to have a "slumber party in her living room one time," and the whole student body once attempted to have a sleep-over at the Hoffman-Boston building.[227] Though the school sleep-over never happened, parents did permit their

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[224]Schildt interview.
[225]Schroeder interview.
[226]Schildt interview.
[227]Mayeux interview.

children to have a slumber party at the librarian's house and to go on weekend field trips with their teachers. During school days, children planned their own field trips, and parents allowed them to travel, unaccompanied by an adult, to museums and parks all over the metropolitan area. Although this now sounds unsafe to anyone in the Washington D.C. area, "there was not the kind of fear and paranoia at that time that began to surface in the early eighties."[228] The barriers and boundaries between students and teachers were very loosely defined at Hoffman-Boston, because the times allowed them to be. Teachers "treated the kids as equals."[229] Sometimes that meant that teachers were a little naive with regard to the activities they planned with their students outside the classroom. However, the staff "treated students with respect," which alleviated tension and did enhance energy in the classroom.[230]

Over the six years its separate operation, the Hoffman-Boston Program struggled to maintain a minimum student population of 180 which the county required for the school to remain open. The school building was isolated from the rest of the county, it required a long bus ride each day to get to school, and many parents questioned the program's ability to academically prepare their children for the demands of high school. Most students who came to Hoffman-Boston had attended Drew Elementary, and for them "it was a natural progressive step" to go from one alternative to the other.[231] However, Hoffman-Boston did recruit students outside of Drew. Each year the students and staff organized skits and puppet shows that they put on at elementary schools throughout the county. It was a modest operation, and the group

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[228]Schildt interview.
[229]Schroeder interview.
[230]Ibid.
[231]Mrs. Flanelley, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1 March 1996.

received modest results, yet "somehow the program always had enough students"[232] to be allowed to continue.

Fortunately, the school administration also supported the creative initiatives of the teachers at Hoffman-Boston. Superintendent Larry Cuban often visited and encouraged student activities. Students set up a factory during their study of the industrial revolution, and "Cuban came over to supervise their work production on sewing machines."[233] Like Chisholm before him, Superintendent Cuban allowed the alternative program relative autonomy and did not interfere in the creativity of its day-to-day operation.

Similarly, the board allowed the program autonomy in filling any staff vacancies at the school. Interview committees composed of teachers and some students were responsible for interviewing prospective faculty and making a recommendation to the school principal, who then informed the county administration of the group's decision. Bobbi Schildt was "shocked" when she went to Hoffman-Boston for an interview and "found [herself] at the end of a large table that was surrounded by the entire teaching staff."[234] She expected an interview with the principal, and though Brandewie was there, Schildt quickly learned that "the teachers had as much if not more to say about changes in staff at the school."[235] This system, though perhaps difficult for the interviewee, worked well to maintain a teaching staff that was both open to innovation and creativity, and devoted to students and meeting their individual needs. The episode also gives insight into the control the teachers at Hoffman-Boston had over the Program. Don Brandewie handled the administration and let the teachers "do pretty much what they wanted."[236]

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[232]Mayeux interview.
[233]Schildt interview.
[234]Schildt interview.
[235]Ibid.
[236]Judy Mayeux interview.

It took a special kind of person to make the Hoffman-Boston Program work. During the first years of the program most teachers were voluntary, and they worked hard to develop an alternative program that would endure in Arlington County. In the following years "involuntary transfers had a detrimental effect on both the students and the teachers involved because not all teachers desired nor agreed with the approach to education practiced at Hoffman-Boston."[237] To protect their students and to protect the Hoffman-Boston Program, the staff challenged the administration's assignment of teachers to their school.

In 1974, a county-wide decline in the student population resulted in a reduction in the number of teachers. Though the basic number of positions at Hoffman-Boston remained almost unchanged, the reduction was felt, and the alternative program was threatened by the "possible loss of its faculty" due to county-wide seniority rules. When Hoffman-Boston lost a teacher, the program suffered because "a new teacher had less experience and less knowledge of the Program."[238] This was particularly detrimental because of the individualized and nature of the Program. "For example, self pacing meant that some students did not finish a course in June and therefore picked up where they left off in September. But if there was a different teacher in September, continuity of the learning experience was more difficult to maintain," and that jeopardized the strength of the school.[239] The School Board agreed that involuntary teachers and a high rate of teacher turnover did threaten the innovative program. As a result, Hoffman-Boston was granted a degree of immunity from staff cuts due to the decline in student population in the county.

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[237]Hoffman-Boston Staff. Letter to the Arlington County Administration and School Board Members, May 30, 1974.
[238]Ibid.
[239]Ibid.

In the Spring of 1975 Don Brandewie announced his retirement, and the Hoffman-Boston Program faced an uncertain future. The school accomplished everything that it did under his protection from County Administration and the school's constant critics. Don Brandewie allowed the teachers to run the school, and the staff feared that a new principal would infringe their liberties and possibly destroy the program. It was with sadness that Hoffman-Boston said good-bye to Don Brandewie, and with reservations that they welcomed Margery Edson as his replacement.

In the fall of 1975, Margery Edson became the new principal of the Hoffman-Boston Program, as the school began its fourth year of operation. Edson had been a school principal in Arlington and she was known as a progressive liberal educator in the county. She had a good reputation with the County Administration, and her enthusiasm and experience "clearly made her the best candidate for the job."[240]

Edson was a "micro-manager," and she had her own ideas about how the Program should operate.[241] However, in its three years of its tenuous existence the school had established itself. Margery Edson therefore encountered "a pretty powerful culture" at Hoffman-Boston, and one that she was not able to change. Occasionally she would make decisions without involving any of the staff. Teachers opposed this, since they were accustomed to their control over the decision-making processes at Hoffman-Boston under Brandewie. Randy McKnight remembers leaving the school building one day and noticing an honor roll posted on the wall. "Hoffman-Boston had never had an honor roll, and [he] went and told Margery that if the school was going to start to have one the staff should have a discussion about it."[242] The honor

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[240]McKnight interview.
[241]Schildt interview.
[242]McKnight interview.

roll was taken down, and the following day the staff had a discussion about the issue. Never again was there an honor roll at Hoffman-Boston.

Even though Edson had her own ideas about how to run the school, "she never hammered things," and teachers did still have a voice, albeit a more limited one.[243] Some of the staff resented Edson's authority more than others, but all them were thankful for her good intentions and efforts to continue the Program after Brandewie left. Perhaps the teachers' greatest satisfaction came from knowing that they had created a school that was strong enough to endure change. The Program did not fold when its founding chief administrator left. The teachers learned to share the decision-making process with Edson, and Edson proved herself by picking up where Brandewie left off and continuing to protect the school from its outside critics. The Hoffman-Boston Program endured, and in doing so it continued to offer a creative and caring educational environment that shaped young lives in a positive and productive way.

Every school year ended with an informal graduation ceremony which highlights the community atmosphere at Hoffman-Boston. Students did not walk across a stage, shake a few hands, and receive a symbolic pat on the back before they were sent on their way. Instead the Hoffman-Boston graduation was an informal affair that crystallized the events and personalities of that year. The teachers usually began the show with one of the unofficial school songs, like the H-B version of "Blowin' in the Wind":

> How many years can a student exist before he can average a C?
> And how many trails can a student endure before he's allowed to be free?
> How many times will we think of you all out in re-al-i-i-ty?
> The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind."

[243]Ibid.

Then, the staff would perform skits with titles such as "Friday Morning Live" and "Saturday Night Fever," and some teachers showcased special talents. Harry Haught's Elvis Presley imitation was always a hit, as was librarian Judy Lucia's baton-twirling exhibition. Finally, each ninth grader was given an uncensored award which allowed the teachers to "get back" at some of their students.[244] The 'Best Foot Forward Award' was given to a student who was expelled on the first day of school for smoking an illegal substance, and a T-shirt emblazoned with the names of every seventh grade girl was once given to a lecherous male student.[245] It was unorthodox, it was not traditional, it was friendly, it was Hoffman-Boston.

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[244]McKnight interview.

[245]Jack Lechner. "Hoffman-Boston graduation is the school's last hurrah." *Arlington News*, June 22, 1978, page 8.

# Chapter Seven
# When Alternatives Collide

Alternative learning was a growing educational trend in the early seventies, but towards the end of the decade the concept lost its popularity, and many alternative and experimental schools folded before they even got off the ground. The alternative schools in Arlington always had a tenuous existence, particularly at the junior high and high school levels. They were small operations with unorthodox teaching methods, and they had an unpopular image in the community. Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston were founded in the early seventies to alleviate student unrest and dissatisfaction in the traditional high school setting, and to provide young people the opportunity to take responsibility for their own education in a relaxed school environment. For their first five years, the alternative programs in Arlington had been allowed to operate virtually free from administrative interference. The liberal county and school boards afforded Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston sufficient autonomy to establish themselves, and Superintendents Robert Chisholm and Larry Cuban, along with Associate Superintendent Harold Wilson, supported the alternative schools and protected them from critics within the county. However, in 1976, the programs were not spared the effects of a decline in the county's student population. At a time when conservatives began to reclaim their seats in Arlington's local government and alternative learning began to fall out of fashion at the national level, the resolve of the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston communities to maintain their programs was challenged.

Entering the 1976-1977 academic year Arlington's overall student population had declined, and once again a strained budget forced the school board to close several small neighborhood elementary and junior high schools. As a result, the school board made several drastic changes: they drafted plans to move ninth grade students into the under-populated high schools, a blueprint to determine intermediate school districts, and a proposal

to merge the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston Programs. [246] The Arlington County Public School System was changing to meet the needs of the community, and if the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston Programs were to endure they would have to adapt to meet that change. In September, 1976, Superintendent Larry Cuban notified the two alternative programs of the school board's plans: it was recommended that the programs merge the following fall. The news was unexpected. For years the alternatives had operated free from bureaucratic interference, and then overnight -- the programs were told that they would have to merge, with less than a year to plan.

Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston had established two very different programs, and neither wanted to lose what it had worked so hard to create. Students at Woodlawn led the resistance. They feared their autonomy would be lost to the structure that a school with younger students would need to have. What would happen to Town Meeting if the two programs merged? What would happen to open campus, and who would be the head teacher? Would there even be a head teacher? What if the new program had a principal? The Woodlawn Program was designed to give students greater responsibility for their own education, but seventh graders had not yet reached that level of maturity. A merger of the two programs would jeopardize everything the school had achieved over its first five years. However, pressures to consolidate the schools continued to mount, and in October, the staffs of the two schools met to discuss the possibility of a merger.

Opinions varied. Both school communities understood the board's recommendation. The ninth grade was going to be added to the high schools. The Woodlawn building was not large enough to accommodate the addition of

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[246]Junior high schools which had been grades 7,8, and 9, became intermediate schools with grades 7 & 8. Years later they gained grade 6.

ninth grade students, and the loss of those students would seriously threaten the Hoffman-Boston Program, which had always struggled to maintain its student population. Therefore, it was in the Hoffman-Boston community's best interests to merge. The Woodlawn community felt differently. They had established the first alternative school in the county, and they had made it work. Woodlawn did not have a problem maintaining its student population, it cultivated a comfortable and creative learning environment, and the percentage of graduates who went on to college as well as student test scores proved the program's success. Woodlawn had no loyalty to Hoffman-Boston, and the program had everything to lose and nothing to gain from the merger. Nothing that is, except the opportunity to continue.

A merger seemed inevitable, but there was concern that less than a year of preparation was not enough time to plan. In attempts to reach agreement there were several meetings between students and staff of the two schools and Superintendent Larry Cuban. The ninth grade was not going to move to the high schools until September of 1978, and the alternative programs lobbied to delay the merger until that date. "At a January 1977 public hearing before the school board a group of Woodlawn students spoke so strongly against the September 1977 date for the merger that the Superintendent and the school board reconsidered the proposal and decided to delay the merger to September 1978."[247] The board did not consider the postponement a concession. The extra year was to be used to plan the merger of the two existing alternatives to create a new program "rather than the Woodlawn idea of merely 'co-locating' the two programs in the same building."[248]

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[247]Report of the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger Committee, Arlington, Virginia, November 29, 1977, page 3.
[248]Ibid.

The board's decision brought temporary relief to both the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston communities. Although the people at Woodlawn were still not happy about the fact that the two programs were going to merge, they now had the time to plan a 'New School' that would preserve those elements they valued most.

Preparation for the merger began in April, 1977. For three months meetings of students, teachers, and parents from the two schools were held to create a structure for the Merger Committee which was established in June, it had a total of seven sub-committees. This was not a small operation. There was a Philosophy and Organization Committee (36 members), a Staffing & Curriculum Committee (9 members), a Guidance & Counseling Committee (14 members), a Naming of the School Committee (6 members), a Building Committee (11 members), a Consolidation Committee (11 members), and finally, there was a Preparation of the Report Committee (4 members). Some members were on only one committee, while others were on as many as six.

For months this dedicated group studied all aspects of two schools: philosophy, administration, guidance, grade level organization, curriculum, staffing, the advisor system, and open/closed campus rules. Proposals and counter-proposals for the merger were discussed, and "virtually every configuration imaginable was considered" until the final options were drafted.[249] Three times, reports were mailed out to all students, parents, and staff of the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston Programs who attended the different mass meetings on September 15, October 13, and November 15, 1977.

Each proposal of each committee was voted on at the mass meeting. "The balloting procedure used called for successive ballots [from the group] until one proposal received a two-thirds majority, and the proposal with the least

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[249]Ibid., page 5.

votes was dropped."[250] There were six proposals for the philosophy statement, and each was discussed and then taken to a vote. Once a proposal received a majority vote, the proposal with the least votes was dropped, and the group repeated the process until only one proposal remained. "It was a tedious process, but it was the most democratic way the Committee had to ensure a new program that was created by both the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston communities."[251] When a proposal was accepted, a representative from each sub-committee prepared a report for inclusion in the final Merger Report. "These documents were then used as a basis for a formal draft which was reviewed and edited into final form" by the consolidation sub-committee.[252]

On November 29, 1979, 'The Report of the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger Committee' was delivered to the Arlington County School Board and Superintendent Larry Cuban. The twenty page merger proposal was the result of "six months of intensive concentration and effort on the part of many students, teachers and parents."[253] It was prepared by participants in the educational experiments who were devoted to the concept of an alternative program that would endure Arlington's societal changes. The proposed New School was "not radically different than the two schools being merged."[254] The obvious difference was that the merged program would include grades seven through twelve. The school would be divided into three levels: Level I (grades 7-8), Level II (grades 9-10), and Level III (grades 11-12). Level I would function with class structure and individual study plans similar to the Hoffman-Boston Program. Level III would function similar to the Woodlawn Program, with more frequent class meetings and less individualized study

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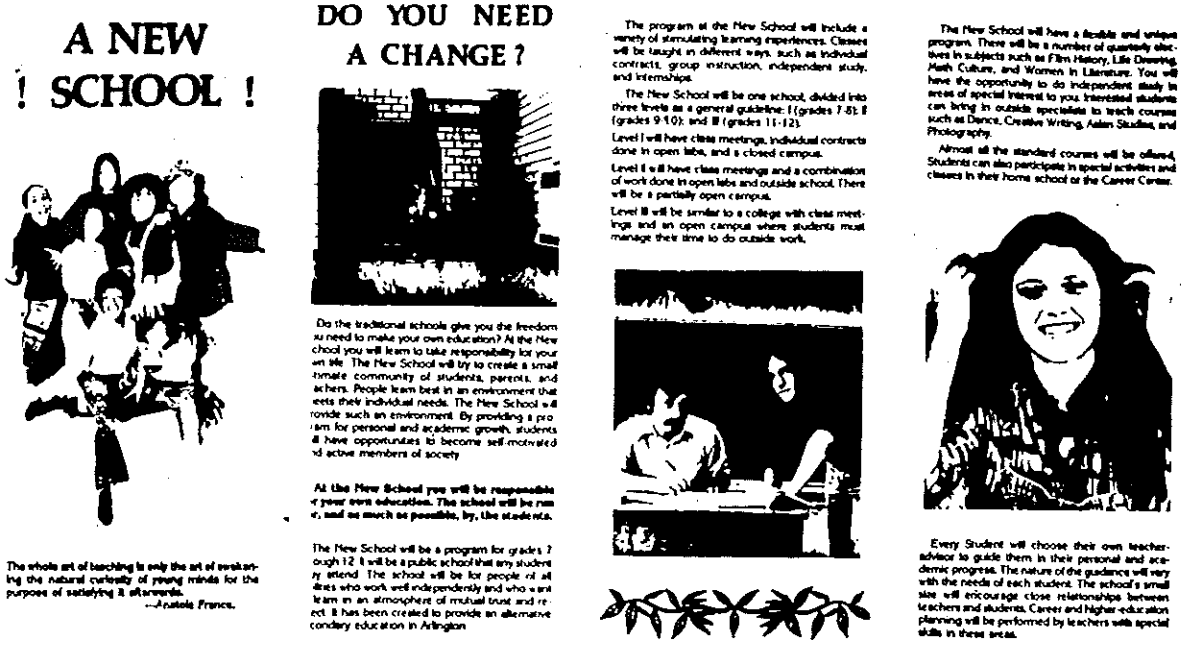
[250]Ibid., page 3.
[251]Randy McKnight interview.
[252]Report of the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger Committee, page 4.
[253]Ibid.
[254]Ibid., page 5.

plans: and Level II would combine ...pects of the other levels with both class meetings and open lab work. Curriculum at the new school would also combine the courses offered at both Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston. The merger committee adopted the Hoffman-Boston version of the teacher-advisor (TA), but kept the Woodlawn 'outside teacher' system and Town Meeting (TM). The new Town Meeting would advise the new school administration, which would consist of one head teacher, one assistant head teacher, and one business manger. The "process of preparing the merger report gave [participants] deep ...ght into the workings of the two programs, and a much greater awareness of ...e part of one school to the operation and purpose of the other."[255] The c... ...ges to the two programs were subtle on paper, but no one knew if and how they would actually work.

The first three months of the 1977-1978 school year were devoted to the preparation of the Merger Report. The schools continued to operate 'business as usual,' but there was something inevitably different about that academic year. The seniors at Woodlawn would not be affected, and the younger students at Hoffman-Boston were perhaps too young to understand the significance of what was happening. This left Woodlawn's tenth and eleventh grade students and the staffs of the two schools to carry the brunt of the forthcoming merger. The group published flyers to advertise the new program, and word of a New School once again circulated the community.

# PRESENTING:

[255]Ibid., page 5.




For two months the programs awaited the board's response to the merger report. The Hoffman-Boston staff was certainly more optimistic than their Woodlawn counterparts. Margery Edson and a small group of teachers visited Woodlawn several times during the course of the year to initiate candid discussions of the merger. Their presence was not welcomed. Though the visitors were not refused a forum to voice their concerns, 'therapeutic' discussions never ensued. It was a time of uncertainty. The program would continue in Arlington but no one was quite sure of the format the new school would take. How many concessions would each side have to make, and what exactly would be lost in the process? Would the school board approve the merger report, and even then, could the programs endure a merger? Ray Anderson and Mary Flynn once had a "heated argument in the parking lot of Hoffman-Boston over the freedoms that Woodlawn students would have to concede when sharing a building with seventh graders."[256] There was an inevitable clash of ideologies which occasionally flared up. The groups often

[256]Anderson interview, page 47.

said that they "were trying to mix apples and oranges, and all they were getting was bruised fruit."[257]

On January 3, 1978, Superintendent Cuban approved the Report of the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger Committee with one major adjustment. Town Meeting was to be "made advisory to a principal/head teacher," and a true administrator (principal/head teacher) was to govern the merged program. It was final. The two programs were going to merge.

The new school was assigned to the Stratford building, and by the end of February, Margery Edson was appointed head teacher of the program, while Ray Anderson was chosen to fill assistant head teacher position. "Officially Margery had experience as a school principal, and in the eyes of the county administrators that made her the more qualified candidate."[258] With those positions filled, all parties felt confident that the new alternative would continue to operate under capable supervision, and the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston communities prepared to close the doors on their respective programs.

There was a mixed sense of loss, optimism, indifference, and foreboding at the two schools as the 1977-1978 school year came to a close. The students and staff at Woodlawn held a funeral for their school, at which they buried a time capsule and read poetry in honor of the program before they left and said good-bye. The Hoffman-Boston community was more optimistic. Margery Edson believed the 1978-1979 school year was "going to be the most exciting year yet in the lives of both Hoffman-Boston and Woodlawn," and ninth grader Lisa Beltz "[couldn't] wait for the joining of the two schools."[259] A distinct 'last hurrah' attitude was evident at Hoffman-Boston's last graduation which

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[257]Schroeder interview.
[258]Mayeux interview.
[259]Jack Lerner. "Hoffman-Boston Graduation is the School's Last Hurrah." *Arlington News*, Arlington, Virginia, June 22, 1978, page 1.

recapped highlights of each of the plays the staff had put on at years end.[260] As always, the ceremony brought laughter and cheer to the students in the audience; however, at this, the school's final graduation, that joy was also accompanied by a few tears.

The merger marks a turning point in the history of alternative education Arlington. In the early seventies the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston programs were founded to meet the changing needs of Arlington's students. Over the years the schools continued to meet student needs which continued to change. There were compromises and there were trade-offs, but the concessions that the programs endured enabled them to continue. "Both schools believed that their programs were worth preserving no matter what the cost," and the merger is proof of their resolve.

The merger was perhaps the greatest compromise that either the Woodlawn or Hoffman-Boston communities could and would ever make. On September 5, 1978, the new school opened its doors. It was called H-B Woodlawn, and it was an alternative to the traditional system of education in Arlington.

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[260]Ibid., page 8.

# Chapter Eight
# H-B Woodlawn: Conflict and Compromise

*H-B Woodlawn:*

> *an alternative secondary program for students in grades 7-12 who want to accept greater responsibility for their own education.*
>
> *a small community of students and teachers who have chosen this school, working together to create a flexible, personalized learning environment.*
>
> *an instructional program that can be adjusted to meet each student's needs with the personal commitment on the part of all participants to do so.*
>
> *an intimate community of people who relate to each other as unique individuals and where close relationships between student and teacher are commonplace.*
>
> *governed by all who belong to it - each student, teacher and parent granted an equal vote.*
>
> *located at 4100 N. Vacation Lane, the former Stratford Junior High School, within walking distance of the Central Library and on bus routes to the resources of the Capital.*[261]

The H-B Woodlawn Program "was a better alternative than people thought it was going to be."[262] Most students and teachers from both Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston began the 1978-1979 academic year with reservations about the new school. The older students continued to lament their beloved Woodlawn and resent the change, the younger students missed the "warm feeling" of Hoffman-Boston and did their best not to cross paths with a sniveling senior, and the staff was rightfully concerned about how the students would adjust.[263] "Everybody felt like they'd lost a lot, and nobody was sure what they'd gain."[264] To be sure the first year was trying.

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[261]H-B Woodlawn Program Brochure, Arlington, Virginia, 1979, page 1.
[262]Ellen Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, February 1996.
[263]Jack Lechner. "H-B Woodlawn Opens: Early Reviews are Mixed." *Arlington News*, Arlington, Virginia, September 7, 1978, page unknown.
[264]Mary Flynn, interview by Rena Levin, Arlington, Virginia, May 1993, printed in a student publication: "They Way It Was, The Way It Is, Teachers' Perspectives on H-B Woodlawn," page 5.

During the 1978-1979 academic year, the toughest critics of the new program were its own participants. In November, the *New School Press* published its first issue with the headline: "IS H.B.W. UP TO PAR?" The school's news writing and editing classes (which included Woodlawn refugees) asked students and teachers to compare the new program to the original.
One 12th grader felt that "Woodlawn had lost its identity."[265] He stated that Woodlawners "were adhering to Hoffman-Boston's way of doing things such as the idea of a mod schedule."[266] Stuart Elliott, another 12th grader, said "there [was] a steady decrease of alternativeness (sic)."[267] He claimed that "participants in the program were becoming more traditional in their outlook," and that they were "not as open to different things."[268] While a number of the older students had their doubts, the teachers and younger students at H-B Woodlawn tended to remain optimistic. Spanish teacher Pam Walker said that "students could still find a learning style to suit their individual preferences and that they were still allowed to work at their own rate."[269] Terilee Edwards, a 10th grader, agreed that "H-B Woodlawn offered more academic freedom because students could take more and different types of classes."[270] The article offered nothing in terms of analysis for the first two months of the program, but it highlighted both the difficulty older students had adapting to the merger and the enthusiasm that the rest of the school community had for the future of H-B Woodlawn.

The merged program adapted aspects of both the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston schools. H-B Woodlawn adapted a 'block' schedule from the

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[265]Staff. *The New School Press -H-B Woodlawn School*, Arlington, Virginia, November 1978, Volume 1, Number 1, page 1.
[266]Ibid.
[267]Ibid.
[268]Ibid.
[269]Ibid.
[270]Ibid.

Hoffman-Boston 'mod' schedule model. Once again, not every class met every day, classes were divided into one hour blocks, the program did not require continuous adult supervision, and students decided how to use their free time. The amount of unsupervised time increased gradually from the seventh to twelfth grade. Some students used free time to study, while others spent it socializing or away from the building. The program trusted the good intentions of its students, who generally reciprocated with a sufficient degree of personal responsibility.

All students were given control in setting educational goals. After the first month, the merger committee's tripartite arrangement which categorized students into three levels proved unnecessary and useless. Students naturally separated themselves according to grade and maturity levels. Academically, the younger students worked closely with their teachers on personal contracts and began to take elective courses such as in foreign language. Ninth and tenth grade students relied less on the contract system and more on group instruction. They did not work as closely with the staff, they took elective courses, and they began to work on independent study projects. The program's oldest students had the most flexibility when scheduling their courses. They took AP courses, electives, worked independently, and continued to have internships. Of course there were always exceptions to the level at which the average student worked. It was not uncommon to have freshmen and seniors in the same elective history courses, or seventh graders and sophomores in the same introductory Spanish class. "Extensive overlapping and the possibilities for diversification and individualization were almost unlimited."[271]

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[271]Report of the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger Committee Report, Arlington, Virginia, November 29, 1977, page 13.

All courses that had been offered at Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston were offered at H-B Woodlawn. In addition to year-long courses, Woodlawn's elective program was also offered in English, Social Studies, and Psychology. "Under the system, an English student took one quarter course each nine week grading period and accumulated a total of one full credit by the end of the year."[272] Woodlawn's "outside teacher" system was also implemented at the new alternative. These courses generally lasted one quarter and they were taught by specialists on a subject in which the year-long teachers were not well versed. Financial difficulties and teacher allocation cuts did not enable H-B Woodlawn to have quarter course outside teachers during the 1978-1979 school year. However, the program's German, Psychology, and Photography courses were all taught by year-long outside teachers that year, and the financial problem was solved the following September. Independent study, interdisciplinary courses and internships were also available at the alternative.

Most of the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston communities did transfer to H-B Woodlawn in the Fall of 1978. Over the summer students chose one of thirty-five full time staff members as their teacher-advisor (TA) for the school year. The TA system at H-B Woodlawn worked almost exactly like it did at Hoffman-Boston. The advisors recorded student attendance and made sure that students met all course requirements for their grade level. Younger students often planned group activities with their TA groups, but the older students boycotted the "touchy-feely" gatherings. The Woodlawn refugees continued to resent anything at H-B Woodlawn that they had not brought with them. For them, Town Meeting was perhaps the new program's saving grace.

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[272]Stuart Elliott, Jim Fussell, and Charlotte Mooney. *The Underground Student Handbook*. Copyright 1979 by the Underground Printing Office, Inc., 47 Space, Black Hole #470127, The Universe, page 4.

Town Meeting was the policy-making body of the new program. It met weekly at H-B Woodlawn just as it had at Woodlawn. Students, teachers, and parents each had one equal vote, and the group decided almost everything that went on in the school. Legally, the head teacher was not bound by the decisions of Town Meeting. However, morally she was, and though the group objected to some of Margery Edson's decisions that first year, "there was no instance of [her] usurping the authority of Town Meeting."[273]

As principal of Hoffman-Boston, Margery Edson had been known to make administrative decisions without consulting the program's students or teaching staff. She continued that practice at H-B Woodlawn. As the program's principal/head teacher, Edson walked a fine line. Certainly some decisions did not require a stamp of approval from Town Meeting before they were made. If a toilet overflowed, Edson did not have to wait until the next TM to get a custodian to fix it. She would have been ridiculed if she did not fix the problem immediately. However, on other issues, Edson sometimes neglected to consult Town Meeting before making a decision, and the H-B Woodlawn "seniors did not let her get away with it."[274] Students did not want Edson to tell them the location of the smoking court, they wanted to vote on it. Similarly, they wanted a voice in deciding the school's schedule, and they wanted to be consulted before a News Board or Personal Message Board took up space on their school walls. "The big joke among the students was deciding what to scold Margery for each week."[275] Officially, the "Town Meeting was made advisory to the head teacher who had the final administrative voice."[276] Therefore the governing body never seriously reprimanded Edson., who did

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[273]Ibid., page 9.
[274]Anderson interview, page 58.
[275]Ibid.
[276]Larry Cuban; Memorandum to the Members of the School Board concerning Recommendations for the Hoffman-Boston/Woodlawn Merger, Arlington, Virginia, January 3, 1978.

have some great ideas, but Town Meeting did continually remind the head teacher of her moral responsibility to share decision-making with the entire school.

The H-B Woodlawn community gradually adapted to its new building and to its new program. Edson improved her relations with Town Meeting, and the Woodlawn refugees grew tired of complaining. "By Spring Break the school had really come together."[277] The seventh graders grew accustomed to the seniors sitting at the table next to them in the cafeteria, and older students were bothered less by the younger ones.

Once everyone was comfortable with the program, they began to appreciate the opportunities it afforded them. School publications were not censored (which allowed students to gripe about the merger), students and staff maintained informal relationships (which again allowed student to gripe about the merger), and those who chose to gripe about the merger were encouraged to do so in a productive way. One trio of Woodlawn refugees that was particularly concerned with maintaining experimentation and creativity at H-B Woodlawn published an "Underground Student Handbook" in the Spring of 1979. Stuart Elliott, Jim Fussell, and Charlotte Mooney hoped that" the Underground Handbook would help the participants in the H-B Woodlawn Program figure out who they were. Perhaps its content would help the new community recover some of the energy that the alternative schools used to have, to find the courage to let go, and to start to really <u>do</u> things."[278] The Handbook addressed all aspects of the H-B Woodlawn Program, beginning with a brief history of the "painful" merger, the Handbook identified the school faculty, it explained schedules, classes, and open labs. A map of the school, teacher biographies, outside resources -- everything about H-B Woodlawn was

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[277]Judy Mayeux, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996.

[278]Jimmy, Charlotte, and Stuart. *The Underground Handbook*, page 1.

included in the Handbook. The students who produced it encouraged all other students to use their ingenuity and to put some of their "own ideas into their classes - books, speakers, field trips, etc."[279] It was a reminder to everyone that they "could really do just about anything at the school -- which was what the program was all about."[280] The handbook itself, which was an independent study project for English credit, is an indicator of the types of things that were possible at H-B Woodlawn. Thought perhaps Stuart Elliott, Jim Fussell, and Charlotte Mooney and many of the other Woodlawn refugees "would still say that the merger never should have happened," it did happen; and their contributions made a lasting impression on the alternative program.[281]

In June 1979, H-B Woodlawn graduated the fifty-seven members of its senior class. The ceremony was a mix of both Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston tradition. A bar-b-que was held on a corner of the school's softball field, teachers stood on a makeshift stage and spoke about each graduate, and each graduate received a student-produced diploma which perhaps summarizes the group's feelings toward the new program. The diploma read: "Toto we're not in Kansas anymore."

"It was difficult for the school to overcome merger anxiety, but eventually it did happen."[282] When those who had most resisted the change graduated, the H-B Woodlawn community was reminded less of its past and focused more on the establishment of its own program. Drawing from both the Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston Programs, H-B Woodlawn began to develop its own alternative program during the 1978-1979 academic year. Since that date, the school has had its own trends and it has created its own traditions.

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[279]Ibid., page 4-5.
[280]Ibid., page 37.
[281]Mary Flynn, interview published by Rena Levin, page 5.
[282]Ibid.

# Chapter Nine
# The Program Evolves

*I would like you to catch a glimpse of H-B Woodlawn:*

*First of all, the size: HB is small -- there are 70 kids per class. That means you'll know most everyone you see in the hall. Also, we call our teachers by their first names, and the student/teacher relationships that exist outside the classroom are friendly and informal. This makes the atmosphere more relaxed. Teachers are supportive and take a personal interest in the students; school is like a big family.*

*Students at HB have access to individualized attention and the flexibility of the program provides ample opportunity to develop and exercise leadership skills. Students organize their own academic schedule and there is a plethora of academic options that can be arranged, such as independent studies, volunteer work for school credit, independent projects, etc. Kids can also develop and create both academic and non-academic electives if enough interest exists to form a class, and our Town Meeting approves it.*

*Students play a major role in decision-making at HB. Our student government is embodied in Town Meeting; all students can participate and any issue can be brought to the meeting: from approving a dance, to deciding not to serve pineapple from South Africa, urging our school and country to divest from that nation, to approving budget allocations to all academic departments.*[283]

The description of H-B Woodlawn in 1989 sounds similar to the original Woodlawn of 1971 and also the H-B Woodlawn of today. Since H-B Woodlawn merged in 1978 until the present day, the alternative program has maintained much of its basic character but also endured several changes in its operation and in its students. The school has always existed to encourage students towards being self-directed learners. For twenty-five years, the two principal tenants of its approach have always been (1): that children are individuals with unique needs and talents, and (2): that learning occurs in its highest form when students play an active role in their education.[284] This basic philosophy is what has always made H-B Woodlawn "alternative," and it has not changed. However, over those years the student body itself has changed. The changes in motivation and behavior from the students of the early seventies to the eighties, and on to the students of today, have been reflected in the H-B

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[283]Jennifir Bailes, Speech for National Honor Society Senior Banquet, printed in *Seen Your '89*, a 1989 student publication by Anne McCarthy and Brad White, Arlington, Virginia, page 8-9.

[284]The Underground Student Handbook, published by Warren Overholt, Arlington, Virginia, Spring 1995, page 4.

Woodlawn Program itself. On paper the school carries on the "tradition" of being alternative, but it can be argued that in some ways it became more traditional.

The flexibility, informality, and individuality of the atmosphere at H-B Woodlawn continues today. Students have continued to schedule their own classes, vote on elective course offerings, and have a decisive voice in governing their school. Students are still are encouraged to design and implement their own educational programs, and the H-B Woodlawn staff continues to meet the ever changing needs of its student body. However, since the 1978-1979 merger, more structure has been imposed on the program. Students at the alternative have become less interested in experiments in education, and more focused on getting into college.

Ironically, the students' own decisive power has acted to curtail the individuality of the alternative program. Perhaps the most powerful decision students at H-B Woodlawn have made was to add more Advanced Placement classes to the program. In the late eighties, "the school began to really emphasize academics."[285] Many students felt that they needed AP courses in order to compete with traditional high school students for admission into college. Students at the alternative "used to view college as a place to learn things to save the world, but that changed as society viewed advanced education as more of an opportunity for personal advancement than intellectual growth."[286] By 1990, H-B Woodlawn offered AP classes for English (grades 11 and 12), History (US and European), Government, second-year Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Computer Science), Math (Calculus AB and BC), and all of the foreign languages. Although students at the alternative originall may have taken the advanced courses for their intended

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[285]Jim Schroeder, interview by Rena Levin, page 11.
[286]Ibid.

goal of offering more challenging work to a select group of students, by 1995, "it was widely acknowledged that students no longer took AP classes for the intellectual rigor involved."[287] Rather, many students chose the advanced courses to boost their G.P.A. and get into the big-name colleges. "Colleges began to demand more of high school applicants. Students have always felt that pressure, and the increased number of AP classes at H-B Woodlawn reflects that."[288]

Growing student preferences for standardized advanced placement classes has limited educational options and virtually eliminated H-B Woodlawn's elective program. "Students don't want choices in the classroom, they want structure."[289] Before the infusion of AP courses, classes met no more than three times a week, and electives, and field trips and educational variety existed much like they had at Woodlawn and Hoffman-Boston. However, with at least 40% of the student body taking advanced placement courses, which meet four times each week in a very traditional classroom setting, H-B Woodlawn as a whole has become more structured and perhaps less "academically alternative."

Over the last twenty-five years the program has continued to adapt to change. In the early seventies students in Arlington wanted to create a school that opposed traditional educational practices, and the creation of Woodlawn provided students that alternative. As the years passed, students at the program were less skeptical of "the system," and they began to adopt some traditional methods of education. Society in the nineties is not what it was in the seventies, and H-B Woodlawn reflects that. The school has not lost its focus,

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[287]Underground Student Handbook, published by Warren Overholt, page 34.
[288]Ellen Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 23 February 1996.
[289]Judy Mayeux, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia.

rather, the concept of an alternative program has proven itself to be flexible which has enabled it to endure.

Originally students at H-B Woodlawn had very little contact with their home schools. Very few participated in extra-curricular activities, and most were content with the educational offerings at the alternative. However, in the mid-late eighties, students became more involved at their traditional home schools. More students participated in sports, National Honor Society, Model UN, and other activities than ever before; a practice that continues up to the present day. Not only does this involvement parallel student aims of attending good colleges, but it has changed the character of the student body as well.

The program had always attracted non-mainstream kinds of students. Woodlawn was founded by the politically active students, who were replaced by those interested in drama, art, and photography. Hoffman-Boston, was sort of a catchall school, that catered to students who needed personalized instruction that the traditional schools did not offer. These groups were content operating independent of the mainstream, and most were not interested in what the traditional schools had to offer. Over the years that has changed. As a result, H-B Woodlawn has attracted a wider variety of students, who themselves are perhaps less "alternative" and more mainstream than those who attended the school a quarter of a century ago.

After it became clear that the school was going to survive the merger, more students and their parents expressed interest in H-B Woodlawn. By the 1980-1981 school year, the alternative could no longer meet student demand, and forty-four students were put on the first waiting list. In contrast with Hoffman-Boston's difficulty in meeting their minimum enrollment, H-B Woodlawn became so popular that parents camped out for as many as three nights before the sign-up to get their child's name on the list.

Students were admitted to H-B Woodlawn on a first-come first-served basis. Each November a sign-up sheet was posted in the office, and the first 70 student names on the list were admitted to the entering seventh grade class. The remaining names were put on a waiting list and only offered admission when a space opened up. Most student who entered the program in seventh grade remained at the alternative until they graduated. For some parents, this made admission for the seventh grade year imperative. By the fall of 1981, all student spaces were filled before winter break, and each year the list continued to fill earlier. By 1987, parents lined up outside of the school to register their children the morning that the sign-up list was posted, and then parents began camping out days in advance of the sign-up.

The first few years that parents camped out evoked very little negative response from the Arlington community. "People may have shaken their heads, but they did not oppose what was going on."[290] However, by 1990, some residents began to denounce the camping event and the entire admission process to H-B Woodlawn. The parents who camped out were only those who could financially afford to do so. These parents did not have to worry about baby-sitters or missing work while they spent the night or the weekend in a tent. Most of the campers were Caucasian and belonging to an upper middle class income bracket, just as most of the H-B Woodlawn students were. Critics scorned the program for its low percentage of minority students, and they branded the school as a "white flight" operation. In 1989, 80% of students at H-B Woodlawn were white, and the school board agreed with the critics who argued that the alternative should have a representative amount of minority students in relation to the percentage in the county.[291] That year, the board

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[290]Anderson interview, page 50.

[291]H-B Woodlawn student enrollment record, Arlington, Virginia, September 1988.

began to examine H-B Woodlawn's admissions procedure, but no changes were made to the first-come first-served system until the 1991-1992 school year.

In the late eighties, student enrollment at the elementary school level was down, and the school board was in the midst of restructuring the county's intermediate schools (grades 7 & 8) when complaints about H-B Woodlawn's admissions procedure began to surface. The board's plans to convert the intermediate schools into middle schools that would include the sixth grade, took precedence over student admissions at the alternative. Planning the conversion was complete by the end of the 1989-1990 school year, and in the Fall of 1990, the sixth grade was added to all middle schools including H-B Woodlawn, which then became an alternative for grades 6-12. The addition was an adjustment, but it was not nearly as controversial as the school board's decision to impose a lottery system for admission to the alternative which began the following school year.

In November, 1991, H-B Woodlawn held its first ever double-blind lottery. Anyone interested in attending the school's sixth grade class the upcoming academic year submitted an application to the school office before the November deadline. That year, 116 student applications were received for the 70 sixth grade spaces. All application forms were placed in a box, on a table, in front of principal, Ray Anderson. At another table ten feet away, Mary McBride, the assistant principal, sat in front of a box with 116 three by five notecards, numbered 1-116. The contents of both boxes were shuffled, and as Anderson randomly selected a student application, McBride blindly chose a three by five notecard. The application was matched with number on the notecard, and the process continued until each application had been assigned a number.

Applications numbered 1-50 were automatically offered admission to

H-B Woodlawn for the following school year regardless of the applicant's ethnicity. The remaining 20 spaces were subject to the school board's "ethnicity clause" which stipulates that the Superintendent of Arlington Pubic Schools and Ray Anderson use the remaining spaces (in 1991, applications numbered 51-116) to ensure an ethnically balanced student body.[292] This meant that if student application #51 was a Caucasian child, he/she might be bumped any number of spaces depending on the racial balance of the first fifty applications selected from the lottery. The sixth grade class that entered H-B Woodlawn in the Fall of 1992 was ethnically balanced, and each sixth grade class since that year has been.[293] The lottery did satisfy critics of the program's admissions procedure, however, the new admissions policy sparked controversy within the H-B Woodlawn community, as well as those applicants who were not admitted.

Students, teachers, and parents have agreed that the program was too homogenous, yet they have never believed that the school board's stipulated lottery is the solution to the problem of achieving and maintaining an ethnically balanced student body. "The lottery system made it too easy for anyone to register for the program, and the selection process does not screen families to make sure that a) the child wants to go the alternative, b) the parents really want their children to attend the school, and c) that both the children and their parents are interested in H-B Woodlawn because it is an alternative educational environment."[294] The school board has does agree with this argument, and several proposals that would replace the lottery system are presently under examination. In the meantime, student

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[292]The Ethnicity Clause to the Lottery stipulates that no more than 52% of the H-B Woodlawn student population can be white, and at least 48% must be an ethnic minority.

[293]A similar procedure does exist for the entering ninth grade class, however, given the limited number of student spaces for that year no more than fifteen students have ever been admitted off of the ninth grade lottery.

[294]Underground Student Handbook, published by Warren Overholt, page 6.

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[294]Underground Student Handbook, published by Warren Overholt, page 6.

applications for H-B Woodlawn continue to increase, the lottery system remains, and the student body continues to diversify.[295] .

Though the program's student body has modified H-B Woodlawn's operation over the years, the school has maintained the fundamentals of the Woodlawn Program that was created in the early seventies. The original program was created to meet the changing needs of student in society, and the alternative continues to meet those needs today. Students and teachers are still partners in learning, education is still personalized, and the school atmosphere remains friendly and informal.

Town Meeting continues to set the standard for the sense of equality that permeates all relationships at H-B Woodlawn. Students and teachers continue to maintain informal relationships, and students often spend their free time talking with teachers on any number of different topics. Each teacher is still an advisor to a group of students, and it is still his/her job to provide academic and personal guidance to those children. Occasionally the groups organize "TA activities [which] range from cookies and milk, to TA softball competition, to a full-fledged week-end beach trip."[296] H-B Woodlawn has also maintained its informal graduation ceremony, to which both students and teachers continue to contribute. For twenty-five years all members of the school community have worked together towards equality in life and learning; the school is like one big family.

On June 12, 1996, H-B Woodlawn will graduate its twenty-fifth "experimental" class. The program has offered students of Arlington County, Virginia an alternative to the traditional system of education since Woodlawn first opened its doors in September 1971. Over the years, the program has

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[295]In November 1995, 185 applications were received for the 75 student spaces available in the in-coming sixth grade class. That number is the largest amount applications ever received.

[296]Underground Student Handbook, published by Warren Overholt, page 13.

changed. Indeed, to endure at the secondary level within the Virginia public school system it has had to. However, the guiding principal of the New School has remained the same, and for a quarter of a century, H-B Woodlawn has encouraged students to accept greater responsibility for their own education. Many students have excelled at the program, and some have failed. Regardless of their transcripts, the value of their participation can be judged as more informative to the students than whether the alternative worked or not. But after twenty-five years of operation, it is hard to say that it has failed.

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